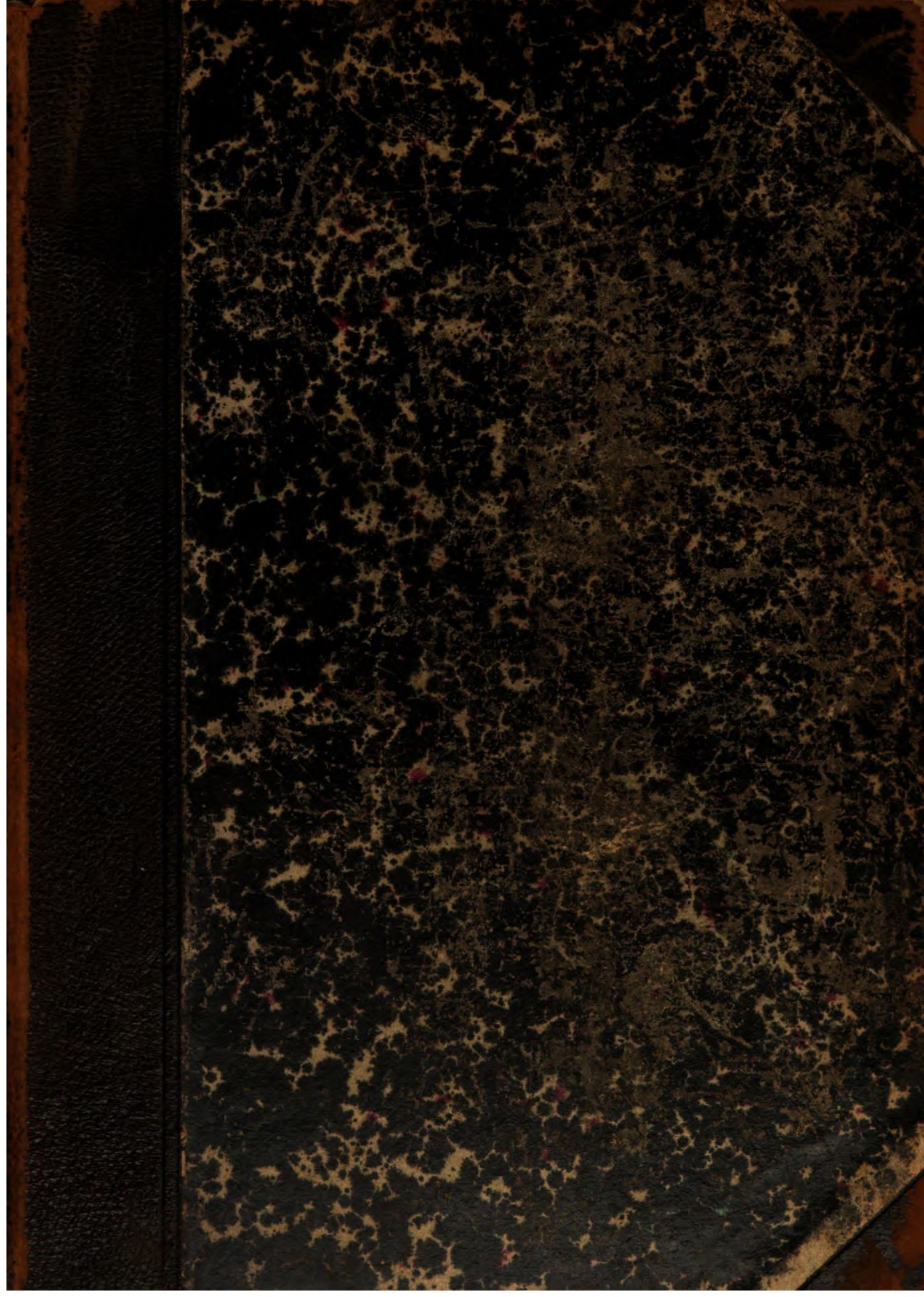






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**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

**LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.**

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# PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE.

BY

CHARLES READE,

AUTHOR OF "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1870.

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"I will frame a work of fiction upon notorious fact, so that anybody shall think he can do the same; shall labour and toil attempting the same, and fail—such is the power of sequence and connection in writing."—

HORACE: *Art of Poetry*.



## PUT YOURSELF IN HIS PLACE.

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### CHAPTER I.

HILLSBOROUGH and its outlying suburbs make bricks by the million, spin and weave both wool and cotton, forge in steel from the finest needle up to a ship's armour, and so add considerably to the kingdom's wealth.

But industry so vast, working by steam, on a limited space, has been fatal to beauty: Hillsborough, though built on one of the loveliest sites in England, is perhaps the most hideous town in creation. All ups and downs and back slums. Not one of its wriggling, broken-backed streets has handsome shops in an unbroken row. Houses seem to have battled in the air, and stuck wherever they tumbled down dead out of the *mêlée*. But, worst of all, the city is pockmarked with public-houses, and bristles with high round chimneys. These are not confined to a locality, but stuck all over the place like cloves in an orange. They defy the law, and belch forth massy volumes of black smoke, that hang like acres of crape over the place, and veil the sun and the blue sky even in the brightest day; but in a fog—why, the air of Hillsborough looks a thing to plough, if you want a dirty job.

More than one crystal stream runs sparkling down the valleys and enters the town; but they soon get



defiled, and creep through it heavily charged with dyes, clogged with putridity, and bubbling with poisonous gases, till at last they turn to mere ink, stink, and malaria, and people the churchyards as they crawl.

This infernal city, whose water is blacking, and whose air is coal, lies in a basin of delight and beauty: noble slopes, broad valleys, watered by rivers and brooks of singular beauty, and fringed by fair woods in places; and, eastward, the hills rise into mountains, and amongst them towers Cairnhope, striped with silver rills, and violet in the setting sun.

Cairnhope is a forked mountain, with a bosom of purple heather and a craggy head. Between its forks stood, at the period of my story, a great curiosity; which merits description on its own account, and also as the scene of curious incidents to come.

It was a deserted church. The walls were pierced with arrow-slits, through which the original worshippers had sent many a deadly shaft in defence of their women and cattle, collected within the sacred edifice at the first news of marauders coming.

Built up among the heathery hills in times of war and trouble, it had outlived its uses. Its people had long ago gone down into the fruitful valley, and raised another church in their midst, and left this old house of God alone, and silent as the tombs of their forefathers that lay around it.

It was no ruin, though on the road to decay. One of the side walls was much lower than the other, and the roof had two great waves, and was heavily clothed, in natural patterns, with velvet moss, and sprinkled all over with bright amber lichen: a few tiles had slipped off in two places, and showed the rafters brown with



time and weather: but the structure was solid and sound; the fallen tiles lay undisturbed beneath the eaves; not a brick, not a beam, not a gravestone had been stolen, not even to build the new church: of the diamond panes full half remained; the stone font was still in its place, with its Gothic cover, richly carved; and four brasses reposed in the chancel, one of them loose in its bed.

What had caused the church to be deserted had kept it from being desecrated; it was clean out of the way: no gipsy, no vagrant, ever slept there, and even the boys of the village kept their distance. Nothing would have pleased them better than to break the sacred windows time had spared, and defile the graves of their forefathers with pitch-farthing and other arts: but it was three miles off, and there was a lion in the way: they must pass in sight of Squire Raby's house; and, whenever they had tried it, he and his groom had followed them on swift horses that could jump as well as gallop, had caught them in the churchyard, and lashed them heartily; and the same night notice to quit had been given to their parents, who were all Mr. Raby's weekly tenants: and this had led to a compromise, and flagellation 2.

Once or twice every summer a more insidious foe approached. Some little party of tourists, including a lady who sketched in water and never finished anything, would hear of the old church, and wander up to it. But Mr. Raby's trusty groom was sure to be after them, with orders to keep by them, under guise of friendship, and tell them outrageous figments, and see that they demolished not, stole not, sculptured not.

All this was odd enough in itself, but it astonished



nobody who knew Mr. Raby. His father and predecessor had guarded the old church religiously in his day, and was buried in it, by his own orders; and, as for Guy Raby himself, what wonder he respected it, since his own mind, like that old church, was out of date, and a relic of the past?

An antique Tory squire, nursed in expiring Jacobitism, and cradled in the pride of race; educated at Oxford, well read in books, versed in county business, and acquainted with trade and commerce; yet puffed up with aristocratic notions, and hugging the very prejudices our nobility are getting rid of—as fast as the vulgar will let them.

He had a sovereign contempt for tradespeople, and especially for manufacturers. Any one of those numerous disputes between masters and mechanics, which distinguish British industry, might have been safely referred to him, for he abhorred and despised them both with strict impartiality.

The lingering beams of a bright December day still gilded the moss-clad roof of that deserted church, and flamed on its broken panes, when a young man came galloping towards it, from Hillsborough, on one of those powerful horses common in that district.

He came so swiftly and so direct, that, ere the sun had been down twenty minutes, he and his smoking horse had reached a winding gorge about three furlongs from the church. Here, however, the bridle-road, which had hitherto served his turn across the moor, turned off sharply towards the village of Cairnhope, and the horse had to pick his way over heather, and bog, and great loose stones. He lowered his nose, and



hesitated more than once. But the rein was loose upon his neck, and he was left to take his time. He had also his own tracks to guide him in places, for this was by no means his first visit; and he managed so well, that at last he got safe to a mountain stream which gurgled past the north side of the churchyard: he went cautiously through the water, and then his rider gathered up the reins, stuck in the spurs, and put him at a part of the wall where the moonlight showed a considerable breach. The good horse rose to it, and cleared it, with a foot to spare; and the invader landed in the sacred precincts unobserved, for the road he had come by was not visible from Raby House, nor indeed was the church itself.

He was of swarthy complexion, dressed in a plain suit of tweed, well made, and neither new nor old. His hat was of the newest fashion, and glossy. He had no gloves on.

He dismounted, and led his horse to the porch. He took from his pocket a large glittering key and unlocked the church door; then gave his horse a smack on the quarter. That sagacious animal walked into the church directly, and his iron hoofs rang strangely as he paced over the brick floor of the aisle, and made his way under the echoing vault, up to the very altar; for near it was the vestry-chest, and in that chest his corn.

The young man also entered the church; but soon came out again with a leathern bucket in his hand. He then went round the church, and was busily employed for a considerable time.

He returned to the porch, carried his bucket in, and locked the door, leaving the key inside.



That night Abel Eaves, a shepherd, was led by his dog, in search of a strayed sheep, to a place rarely trodden by the foot of man or beast, viz. the west side of Cairnhope Peak. He came home pale and disturbed, and sat by the fireside in dead silence. "What ails thee, my man?" said Janet, his wife; "and there's the very dog keeps a whimpering."

"What ails us, wife? Pincher and me? We have seen summat."

"What was it?" inquired the woman, suddenly lowering her voice.

"Cairnhope old church all o' fire inside."

"Bless us and save us!" said, Janet, in a whisper.

"And the fire it did come and go, as if hell was a blowing at it. One while the windows was a dull red like, and the next they did flare so, I thought it would all burst out in a blaze. And so 'twould, but, bless your heart, their heads ha'n't ached this hundred year and more, as lighted that there devilish fire."

He paused a moment, then said, with sudden gravity and resignation, and even a sort of half business-like air, "Wife, ye may make my shroud, and sew it and all; but I wouldn't buy the stuff of Bess Crummles; she is an ill-tongued woman, and came near making mischief between you and me last Lammermas as ever was."

"Shroud!" cried Mrs. Eaves, getting seriously alarmed. "Why, Abel, what is Cairnhope old church to you? You were born in another parish."

Abel slapped his thigh. "Ay, lass, and another county, if ye go to that." And his countenance brightened suddenly.



"And, as for me," continued Janet, "I'm Cairn-hope; but my mother came from Morpeth, a widdy: and she lies within a hundred yards of where I sit a talking to thee. There's none of my kin laid in old Cairnhope churchyard. Warning's not for thee, nor me, nor yet for our Jock. Eh, lad, it will be for Squire Raby. His father lies up there, and so do all his folk. Put on thy hat this minute, and I'll hood myself, and we'll go up to Raby Hall, and tell Squire.

Abel objected to that, and intimated that his own fireside was particularly inviting to a man, who had seen diabolical fires that came and went, and shone through the very stones and mortar of a dead church.

"Nay, but," said Janet, "they sort o' warnings are not to be slighted neither. We must put it off on to Squire, or I shall sleep none this night."

They went up, hand in hand, and often looked askant upon the road.

When they got to the Hall, they asked to see Mr. Raby. After some demur they were admitted to his presence, and found him alone, so far as they could judge by the naked eye; but, as they arrived there charged to the muzzle with superstition, the room presented to their minds some appearances at variance with this seeming solitude. Several plates were set as if for guests, and the table groaned, and the huge sideboard blazed, with old silver. The Squire himself was in full costume, and on his bosom gleamed two orders bestowed upon his ancestors by James III. and Charles III. In other respects he was rather innocuous, being confined to his chair by an attack of gout, and in the act of sipping the superannuated compound that had given it him—port. Nevertheless, his light



hair, dark eyebrows, and black eyes, awed them, and co-operated with his brilliant costume and the other signs of company, to make them wish themselves at the top of Cairnhope Peak. However, they were in for it, and told their tale, but in tremulous tones and a low deprecating voice, so that if the room *should* happen to be infested with invisible grandees from the other world, their attention might not be roused unnecessarily.

Mr. Raby listened with admirable gravity; then fixed his eyes on the pair in silence; and then said in a tone so solemn it was almost sepulchral, "This very day, nearly a century and a half ago, Sir Richard Raby was beheaded for being true to his rightful king—"

"Eh, dear, poor gentleman! so now a walks." It was Janet who edged in this—

"And," continued the gentleman, loftily ignoring the comment, "they say that on this night such of the Rabys as died Catholics hold high mass in the church, and the ladies walk three times round the churchyard; twice with their veils down, once with bare faces, and great eyes that glitter like stars."

"I wouldn't like to see the jades," quavered Abel: "their ladyships I mean, axing their pardon."

"Nor I!" said Janet, with a great shudder.

"It would not be good for you," suggested the Squire; "for the first glance from those dead and glittering eyes strikes any person of the lower orders dumb; the second, blind; the third, dead. So I'm *informed*. Therefore—*let me advise you never to go near Cairnhope old church at night.*"

"Not I, sir," said the simple woman.



"Nor your children: unless you are very tired of them."

"Heaven forbid, sir! But oh, sir, we thought it might be a warning like."

"To whom?"

"Why, sir, th' old Squire lies there; and heaps more of your folk: and so Abel here was afear'd—but you are the best judge; we be no scholars. Th' old church warn't red-hot from eend to eend for nought; that's certain."

"Oh, it is me you came to warn?" said Raby, and his lip curled.

"Well, sir" (mellifluously), "we thought you had the best right to know."

"My good woman," said the warned, "I shall die when my time comes. But I shall not hurry myself, for all the gentlemen in Paradise, nor all the blackguards upon earth."

He spake, and sipped his port with one hand, and waved them superbly back to their village with the other.

But, when they were gone, he pondered.

And the more he pondered, the farther he got from the prosaic but singular fact.

## CHAPTER II.

IN the old oak dining-room, where the above colloquy took place, hung a series of family portraits. One was of a lovely girl with oval face, olive complexion, and large dark tender eyes; and this was the gem of the whole collection; but it conferred little pleasure on



the spectator, owing to a trivial circumstance—it was turned with its face to the wall; and all that met the inquiring eye was an inscription on the canvas, not intended to be laudatory.

This beauty, with her back to creation, was Edith Raby, Guy's sister.

During their father's lifetime she was petted and allowed her own way. Hillsborough, odious to her brother, was, naturally, very attractive to her, and she often rode into the town to shop and chat with her friends, and often stayed a day or two in it, especially with a Mrs. Manton, wife of a wealthy manufacturer.

Guy merely sneered at her, her friends, and her tastes, till he suddenly discovered that she had formed an attachment to one of the obnoxious class, Mr. James Little, a great contract builder. He was too shocked at first to vent his anger. He turned pale, and could hardly speak; and the poor girl's bosom began to quake.

But Guy's opposition went no farther than cold aversion to the intimacy—until his father died. Then, though but a year older than Edith, he assumed authority and, as head of the house, forbade the connexion. At the same time he told her he should not object, under the circumstances, to her marrying Dr. Amboyne, a rising physician, and a man of good family, who loved her sincerely, and had shown his love plainly before ever Mr. Little was heard of.

Edith tried to soften her brother; but he was resolute, and said Raby Hall should never be an appendage to a workshop. Sooner than that, he would settle it on his cousin Richard, a gentleman he abhorred, and



never called, either to his face or behind his back, by any other name than "Dissolute Dick."

Then Edith became very unhappy, and temporised more or less, till her lover, who had shown considerable forbearance, lost patience at last, and said she must either have no spirit, or no true affection for him.

Then came a month or two of misery, the tender clinging nature of the girl being averse to detach itself from either of these two persons. She loved them both with an affection she could have so easily reconciled, if they would only have allowed her.

And it all ended according to Nature. She came of age, plucked up a spirit, and married Mr. James Little.

Her brother declined to be present at the wedding; but, as soon as she returned from her tour, and settled in Hillsborough, he sent his groom with a cold, civil note, reminding her that their father had settled nineteen hundred pounds on her, for her separate use, with remainder to her children, if any; that he and Mr. Graham were the trustees of this small fund; that they had invested it, according to the provisions of the settlement, in a first mortgage on land; and informing her that half a year's interest at  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. was due, which it was his duty to pay into her own hand and no other person's; she would therefore oblige him by receiving the enclosed cheque, and signing the enclosed receipt.

The receipt came back signed, and with it a few gentle lines, "hoping that, in time, he would forgive her, and bestow on her what she needed and valued



more than money; her own brother's, her only brother's affection."

On receiving this, his eyes were suddenly moist, and he actually groaned. "A lady every inch!" he said; "yet she has gone and married a bricklayer."

Well, blood is thicker than water, and in a few years they were pretty good friends again, though they saw but little of one another, meeting only in Hillsborough, which Guy hated, and never drove into now, without what he called his antidotes; a Bible and a bottle of lavender-water. It was his humour to read the one, and sprinkle the other, as soon as ever he got within the circle of the smoky trades.

When Edith's little boy was nine years old, and much admired for his quickness and love of learning, and of making walking-stick heads and ladies' work-boxes, Mr. Little's prosperity received a severe check, and through his own fault. He speculated largely in building villas, overdid the market, and got crippled. He had contracts uncompleted, and was liable to penalties; and at last saw himself the nominal possessor of a brick wilderness, but on the verge of ruin for want of cash.

He tried every other resource first: but at last he came to his wife, to borrow her 1,900*l*. The security he offered was a mortgage on twelve carcasses, or houses the bare walls and roofs of which were built.

Mrs. Little wrote at once to Mr. Raby for her money.

Instead of lending the trust-money hastily, Raby submitted the proposal to his solicitor, and that gentleman soon discovered the vaunted security was a second mortgage, with interest overdue on the first; and so he told Guy, who then merely remarked, "I expected



as much; when had a tradesman any sense of honour in money matters? This one would cheat his very wife and child."

He declined the proposal, in two words, "Rotten security!"

Then Mr. James Little found another security that looked very plausible, and primed his wife with arguments, and she implored Guy to call and talk it over with them both.

He came that very afternoon, and brought his father's will.

Then Edith offered the security, and tried to convey to the trustee her full belief that it was undeniable.

Guy picked terrible holes in it, and read their father's will, confining the funds to consols, or a first mortgage on land. "You take the money on these conditions; it is almost as improper of you to wish to evade them, as it would be of me to assist you. And then there is your child; I am bound in honour not to risk his little fortune. See, here's my signature to that."

"My child!" cried Edith. "When he comes of age, I'll go on my knees to him and say, 'My darling, I borrowed your money to save your father's credit.' And my darling will throw his arms round me, and forgive me."

"Simpleton!" said Guy. "And how about your daughters and their husbands? And their husbands' solicitors? Will they throw their arms round your neck, and break forth into twaddle? No! I have made inquiries. Your husband's affairs are desperate. I won't throw your money into his well; and you will both live



to thank me for seeing clearer than you do, and saving this 1,900*l.* for you and yours."

James Little had writhed in his chair for some time; he now cried out wildly, "Edith, you shall demean yourself no more. He always hated me; and now let him have his will, and seal my dishonour and my ruin. Oblige me by leaving my house, Mr. Raby."

"Oh, no, James!" cried Edith, trembling, and shocked at this affront.

But Guy rose like a tower. "I've noticed this trait in all tradespeople," said he grimly. "They are obsequious to a gentleman so long as they hope to get the better of him; but, the moment they find it impossible to overreach him, they insult him." And with this he stalked out of the house.

"Oh, my poor James, how could you?" said Edith.

"Forgive me," said he, quietly. "It is all over. That was our last chance."

Guy Raby walked down the street, stung to the quick. He went straight to his solicitor and arranged to borrow 1,900*l.* on his own property. "For," said he, "I'll show them both how little a snob can understand a gentleman. I won't tamper with her son's money, but I'll give her my own to throw into his well. Confound him! why did she ever marry him?"

When the business was virtually settled, he came back to the house in great haste.

Meantime Mr. James Little went up to his dressing-room, as usual, to dress for dinner; but he remained there so long that, at last, Mrs. Little sent her maid to tell him dinner was ready.

The girl had hardly reached the top of the stairs,



when she gave a terrible scream that rang through the whole house.

Mrs. Little rushed upstairs, and found her clinging to the banisters, and pointing at the floor, with eyes protruding and full of horror. Her candlestick had fallen from her benumbed hand; but the hall-lamp revealed what her finger was quivering and pointing at: a dark fluid trickling slowly out into the lobby from beneath the bed-room door.

It was blood.

The room was burst into, and the wretched tottering wife, hanging upon her sobbing servants, found her lover, her husband, her child's father, lying on the floor, dead by his own hand; stone dead. A terrible sight for strangers to see; but for her, what words can even shadow the horror of it!

I drop the veil on her wild bursts of agony, and piteous appeals to him who could not hear her cries.

The gaping wound that let out that precious life, her eye never ceased to see it, nor her own heart to bleed with it, while she lived.

She was gently dragged away, and supported down to another room. Doctor Amboyne came and did what he could for her; and that was—nothing.

At this time she seemed stupefied. But, when Guy came beaming into the room to tell her he had got her the money, a terrible scene occurred. The bereaved wife uttered a miserable scream at sight of him, and swooned away directly.

The maids gathered round her, laid her down, and cut her stays, and told Guy the terrible tidings, in broken whispers, over her insensible body.



He rose to his feet horrified. He began to gasp and sob. And he yearned to say something to comfort her. At that moment his house, his heart, and all he had, were hers.

But, as soon as she came to herself, and caught sight of him, she screamed out, "Oh, the sight of him! the sight of him!" and swooned away again.

Then the women pushed him out of the room, and he went away with uneven steps, and sick at heart.

He shut himself up in Raby Hall, and felt very sad and remorseful. He directed his solicitor to render Mrs. Little every assistance, and supply her with funds. But these good offices were respectfully declined by Mr. Joseph Little, the brother of the deceased, who had come from Birmingham to conduct the funeral and settle other matters.

Mr. Joseph Little was known to be a small master-cutler, who had risen from a workman, and even now put blades and handles together with his own hands, at odd times, though he had long ceased to forge or grind.

Mr. Raby drew in haughtily at this interference.

It soon transpired that Mr. James Little had died hopelessly insolvent, and the 1,900*l.* would really have been engulfed.

Raby waited for this fact to sink into his sister's mind; and then one day nature tugged so at his heart-strings, that he dashed off a warm letter beginning—"My poor Edith, let bygones be bygones," and inviting her and her boy to live with him at Raby Hall.

The heart-broken widow sent back a reply, in a handwriting scarcely recognisable as hers. Instead of her usual precise and delicate hand, the letters were



large, tremulous, and straggling, and the lines slanted downwards.

“WRITE to me, speak to me, no more. For pity’s sake let me forget there is a man in the world who is my brother and his murderer.”

“EDITH.”

Guy opened this letter with a hopeful face, and turned pale as ashes at the contents.

But his conscience was clear, and his spirit high. “Unjust idiot!” he muttered, and locked her letter up in his desk.

Next morning he received a letter from Joseph Little, in a clear, stiff, perpendicular writing:—

“SIR,—I find my sister-in-law wrote you, yesterday, a harsh letter, which I do not approve; and have told her as much. Deceased’s affairs were irretrievable, and I blame no other man for his rash act, which may God forgive! As to your kind and generous invitation, it deserves her gratitude; but Mrs. Little and myself have mingled our tears together over my poor brother’s grave, and now we do not care to part. Before your esteemed favour came to hand, it had been settled she should leave this sad neighbourhood and keep my house at Birmingham, where she will meet with due respect. I am only a small tradesman; but I can pay my debts, and keep the pot boiling. Will teach the boy some good trade, and make him a useful member of society, if I am spared.

“I am, sir,

“Yours respectfully,

“JOSEPH LITTLE.”



"SIR,—I beg to acknowledge, with thanks, your respectable letter.

"As all direct communication between Mrs. James Little and myself is at an end, oblige me with your address in Birmingham, that I may remit to you, half-yearly, as her agent, the small sum that has escaped bricks and mortar.

"When her son comes of age, she will probably forgive me for declining to defraud him of his patrimony.

"But it will be too late; for I shall never forgive her, alive or dead.

"I am, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"GUY RABY."

When he had posted this letter he turned Edith's picture to the wall, and wrote on the canvas—

"GONE INTO TRADE."

He sent for his attorney, made a new will, and bequeathed his land, houses, goods and chattels, to Dissolute Dick and his heirs for ever.

### CHAPTER III.

THE sorrowful widow was so fond of her little Henry, and the uncertainty of life was so burnt into her now, that she could hardly bear him out of her sight. Yet her love was of the true maternal stamp; not childish and self-indulgent. She kept him from school, for fear he should be brought home dead to



her; but she gave her own mind with zeal to educate him. Nor was she unqualified. If she had less learning than school-masters, she knew better how to communicate what she did know to a budding mind. She taught him to read fluently, and to write beautifully; and she coaxed him, as only a woman can, over the dry elements of music and arithmetic. She also taught him dancing and deportment, and to sew on a button. He was a quick boy at nearly everything, but, when he was fourteen, his true genius went a-head of his mere talents: he showed a heaven-born gift for—carving in wood. This pleased Joseph Little hugely, and he fostered it judiciously.

The boy worked, and thought, and in time arrived at such delicacies of execution, he became discontented with the humdrum tools then current. "Then learn to make your own, boy," cried Joseph Little; joyfully; and so initiated him into the whole mystery of hardening, forging, grinding, handle-making, and cutlery: and Henry, young and enthusiastic, took his turn at them all in right down earnest.

At twenty, he had sold many a piece of delicate carving, and could make graving-tools incomparably superior to any he could buy; and, for his age, was an accomplished mechanic.

Joseph Little went the way of all flesh.

They mourned and missed him; and, at Henry's earnest request, his mother disposed of the plant, and went with him to London.

Then the battle of life began. He was a long time out of employment, and they both lived on his mother's little fortune.



But Henry was never idle. He set up a little forge hard by, and worked at it by day, and at night he would often sit carving, while his mother read to him, and said he, "Mother, I'll never rest till I can carve the bloom upon a plum."

Not to dwell on the process, the final result was this. He rose at last to eminence as a carver; but as an inventor and forger of carving-tools he had no rival in England.

Having with great labour, patience, and skill, completed a master-piece of carving, (there were plums with the bloom on, and other incredibles,) and also a set of carving-tools equally exquisite in their way, he got a popular tradesman to exhibit both the work and the tools in his window, on a huge silver salver.

The thing made a good deal of noise in the trade, and drew many spectators to the shop window.

One day Mr. Cheetham, a master-cutler, stood in admiration before the tools, and saw his way to coin the workman.

This Cheetham was an able man, and said to himself, "I'll nail him for Hillsborough, directly. London mustn't have a hand that can beat us at anything in our line."

He found Henry out, and offered him constant employment, as a forger and cutler of carving-tools, at 4*l.* per week.

Henry's black eyes sparkled, but he restrained himself. "That's to be thought of. I must speak to my old lady. She is not at home just now."

He did speak to her, and she put her two hands together and said, "Hillsborough! Oh, Henry!" and the tears stood in her eyes directly.



"Well, don't fret," said he: "it is only saying no."

So when Mr. Cheetham called again for the reply, Henry declined, with thanks. On this, Mr. Cheetham never moved, but smiled, and offered him 6*l.* per week, and his journey free.

Henry went into another room, and argued the matter. "Come, mother, he is up to 6*l.* a week now; and that is every shilling I'm worth; and, when I get an apprentice, it will be 9*l.* clear to us."

"The sight of the place!" objected Mrs. Little, hiding her face in her hands instinctively.

He kissed her, and talked good manly sense to her, and begged her to have more courage.

She was little able to deny him, and she consented; but cried, out of his sight, a good many times about it.

As for Henry, strong in the consciousness of power and skill, he felt glad he was going to Hillsborough. "Many a workman has risen to the top of the tree in that place," said he. "Why, this very Cheetham was grinding saws in a water-wheel ten years ago, I've heard uncle Joe say. Come, mother, don't you be a baby! I'll settle you in a cottage outside the smoke; you shall make a palace of it; and we'll rise in the very town where we fell, and friends and foes shall see us."

Mr. Cheetham purchased both the carving and the tools to exhibit in Hillsborough; and the purchase-money, less a heavy commission, was paid to Henry. He showed Mrs. Little thirty pounds, and helped her pack up; and next day they reached Hillsborough by train.

Henry took a close cab, and carried his mother off



to the suburbs in search of a lodging. She wore a thick veil, and laid her head on her son's shoulder, and held his brown though elegant hand with her white fingers, that quivered a little as she passed through the well-known streets.

As for Henry, he felt quite triumphant and grand, and consoled her in an off-hand, hearty way. "Come, cheer up, and face the music. They have all forgotten you by this time, and, when they do see you again, you shall be as good as the best of them. I don't drink, and I've got a trade all to myself here, and I'd rather make my fortune in this town than any other: and, mother, you have been a good friend to me; I won't ever marry till I have done you justice, and made you the queen of this very town."

And so he rattled on, in such high spirits, that the great soft thing began to smile with motherly love and pride through her tears, ere they found a lodging.

Next day to the works, and there the foreman showed him a small forge on the ground floor, and a vacant room above to make his handles in and put the tools together: the blades were to be ground, whetted, and finished by cheaper hands.

A quick-eared grinder soon came up to them, and said roughly, "Ain't we to wet new forge?"

"They want their drink out of you," said the foreman; and whispered, in great anxiety, "Don't say no, or you might as well work in a wasp's nest as here."

"All right," said Henry, cheerfully. "I'm no drinker myself, but I'll stand what is customary."

"That is right," said Foreman Bayne. "'Twill cost you fifteen shillings. But peace is cheap at as many guineas."



The word was given, and every man who worked on the same floor with Henry turned out to drink at his expense, and left off work for a good hour. With some exceptions they were a rough lot, and showed little friendliness or good-humour over it. One even threw out a hint that no cockney forges were wanted in Hillsborough. But another took him up and said, "Maybe not; but you are not much of a man to drink his liquor and grudge him his bread."

After this waste of time and money, Henry went back to the works, and a workman told him, rather sulkily, he was wanted in the foreman's office.

He went in, and there was a lovely girl of eighteen, who looked at him with undisguised curiosity, and addressed him thus: "Sir, is it you that carve wood so beautifully?"

Henry blushed, and hesitated; and that made the young lady blush herself a very little, and she said, "I wished to take lessons in carving." Then, as he did not reply, she turned to Mr. Bayne. "But perhaps he objects to teach other people?"

"*We* should object to his teaching other workmen," said the foreman; "but," turning to Henry, "there is no harm in your giving her a lesson or two, after hours. You will want a set of the tools, Miss?"

"Of course I shall. Please put them into the carriage; and——when will he come and teach me, I wonder? for I am wild to begin."

Henry said he could come Saturday afternoon, or Monday morning early.

"Whichever you please," said the lady, and put down her card on the desk; then tripped away to her



carriage, leaving Henry charmed with her beauty and ease.

He went home to his mother, and told her he was to give lessons to the handsomest young lady he had ever seen. "She has bought the specimen tools too; so I must forge some more, and lose no time about it."

"Who is she, I wonder?"

"Here is her card. 'Miss Carden, Woodbine Villa, Heath Hill.'"

"Carden!" said the widow. Then, after a moment's thought, "Oh, Henry, don't go near them. Ah, I knew how it would be. Hillsborough is not like London. You can't be long hid in it."

"Why, what is the matter? Do you know the lady?"

"Oh, yes. Her papa is director of an insurance company in London. I remember her being born very well. The very day she was christened—her name is Grace—you were six years old, and I took you to her christening: and oh, Harry, my brother is her godfather. Don't you go near that Grace Carden; don't visit any one that knew us in better days."

"Why, what have we to be ashamed of?" said Henry. "'Tisn't as if we sat twiddling our thumbs and howling, 'We have seen better days.' And 'tisn't as if we asked favours of anybody. For my part I don't care who knows I am here, and can make three hundred a year with my own hands and wrong no man. I'd rather be a good workman in wood and steel than an arrogant old fool like your b——. No, I won't own him for yours or mine either—call him



Raby. Well, I wouldn't change places with him, nor any of his sort: I'm a British workman, and worth a dozen Rabys—useless scum!"

"That you are, dear; so don't demean yourself to give any of them lessons. Her godfather would be sure to hear of it."

"Well, I won't, to please you. But you have no more pluck than a chicken—begging your pardon, mother."

"No, dear," said Mrs. Little, humbly, quite content to gain her point and lose her reputation for pluck; if any.

Henry worked regularly, and fast, and well, and in less than a fortnight a new set of his carving-tools were on view in Hillsborough, and another in London; for it was part of Mr. Cheetham's strategy to get all the London orders, and even make London believe that these superior instruments had originated in Hillsborough.

One day Miss Carden called and saw Bayne in the office. Her vivid features wore an expression of vexation, and she complained to him that the wood-carver had never been near her.

Bayne was surprised at that; but he was a man who always allayed irritation on the spot. "Rely on it, there's some reason," said he. "Perhaps he has not got settled. I'll go for him directly."

"Thank you," said the young lady. Then, in the same breath, "No, take me to him, and perhaps we may catch him carving—cross thing!"

Bayne assented cheerfully, and led the way across a yard, and up a dirty stone stair, which, solid as it was, vibrated with the powerful machinery that steam



was driving on every side of it. He opened a door suddenly, and Henry looked up from his work, and saw the invaders.

He stared a little at first, and then got up and looked embarrassed and confused.

"You did not keep your word, sir," said Grace, quietly.

"No," he muttered, and hung his head.

He seemed so confused and ashamed, that Bayne came to his assistance. "The fact is, no workman likes to do a hand's-turn on Saturday afternoon. I think they would rather break Sunday than Saturday."

"It is not that," said Henry, in a low voice.

Grace heard him, but answered Mr. Bayne: "Oh, dear, I wish I had known. I fear I have made an unreasonable request: for, of course, after working so hard all the week——but then why did you let me purchase the tools to carve with? Papa says they are very dear, Mr. Bayne. But that is what gentlemen always say if one buys anything that is really good. But of course they *will* be dear, if I am not to be taught how to use them." She then looked in Mr. Bayne's face with an air of infantine simplicity: "Would Mr. Cheetham take them back, I wonder, under the circumstances?"

At this sly thrust, Bayne began to look anxious; but Henry relieved him the next moment by saying, in a sort of dogged way, "There, there; I'll come." He added, after a pause, "I will give you six lessons, if you like."

"I shall be so much obliged. When will you come, sir?"

"Next Saturday, at three o'clock."



"I shall be sure to be at home, sir."

She then said something polite about not disturbing him further, and vanished with an arch smile of pleasure and victory, that disclosed a row of exquisite white teeth, and haunted Henry Little for many a day after.

He told his mother what had happened, and showed so much mortified pride that she no longer dissuaded him from keeping his word. "Only pray don't tell her your name," said she.

"Well, but what am I to do if she asks it?"

"Say Thompson, or Johnson, or anything you like, except Little."

This request roused Henry's bile. "What, am I a criminal, to deny my name? And how shall I look, if I go and give her a false name, and then she comes to Bayne and learns my right one? No, I'll keep my name back, if I can; but I'll never disown it. I'm not ashamed of it, if you are."

This reduced poor Mrs. Little to silence; followed, in due course, by a few meek, clandestine tears.

Henry put on his new tweed suit, and hat, and went up to the villa. He announced himself as the workman from Cheetham's; and the footman, who had probably his orders, ushered him into the drawing-room at once. There he found Grace Carden seated, reading, and a young woman sewing at a respectful distance. This pair were types; Grace, of a young English gentlewoman, and Jael Dence of a villager by unbroken descent. Grace was tall, supple, and serpentine, yet not thin; Jael was robust and ample, without being fat; she was of the same height, though Grace looked the taller. Grace had dark brown eyes and



light brown hair; and her blooming cheek and bewitching mouth shone with expression so varied, yet vivid, and always appropriate to the occasion, grave or gay, playful or dignified, that her countenance made artificial faces, and giggling-in-the-wrong-place faces, painfully ridiculous. As for such faces as Jael's, it killed them on the spot, but that was all. Jael's hair was reddish, and her full eyes were grey; she was freckled a little under the eyes, but the rest of her cheek full of rich pure colour, healthy, but not the least coarse; and her neck an alabaster column. Hers was a meek, monotonous countenance; but with a certain look of concentration. Altogether, a humble beauty of the old rural type; healthy, cleanly, simple, candid, yet demure.

Henry came in, and the young lady received him with a manner very different from that she had worn down at the works. She was polite, but rather stiff and dignified.

He sat down at her request, and, wondering at himself, entered on the office of preceptor. He took up the carving-tools, and explained the use of several; then offered, by way of illustration, to work on something.

"That will be the best way, much," said Grace quietly, but her eye sparkled.

"I dare say there's some lumber to be found in a great house like this?"

"Lumber? why, there's a large garret devoted to it. Jael, please take him to the lumber-room."

Jael fixed her needle in her work, and laid it down gently on a table near her, then rose and led the way to the lumber-room.



In that invaluable repository Henry soon found two old knobs lying on the ground (a four-poster had been wrecked hard by), and a piece of deal plank jutting out of a mass of things. He pulled hard at the plank; but it was long, and so jammed in by miscellaneous articles, that he could not get it clear.

Jael looked on demurely at his efforts for some time; then she suddenly seized the plank a little higher up. "Now, pull," said she, and gave a tug like a young elephant: out came the plank directly, with a great rattle of dislocated lumber.

"Well, you are a strong one," said Henry.

"Oh, one and one makes two, sir," replied the vigorous damsel, modestly.

"That is true, but you threw your weight into it like a workman. Now hand me that rusty old saw, and I'll cut off as much as we want."

While he was sawing off a piece of the plank, Jael stood and eyed him silently a while. But presently her curiosity oozed out. "If you please, sir, be you really a working man?"

"Why, what else should I be?" was the answer, given rather brusquely.

"A great many gentlefolks comes here as is no better dressed nor you be."

"Dress is no rule. Don't you go and take me for a gentleman, or we shan't agree. Wait till I'm as arrogant, and empty, and lazy as they are. I am a workman, and proud of it."

"It's nought to be ashamed on, that's certain," said Jael. "I've carried many a sack of grain up into our granary, and made a few hundred-weight of cheese



and butter, besides house-work and farm-work. Bless your heart, I bayn't idle when I be at home."

"And pray where is your home?" asked Henry, looking up a moment, not that he cared one straw.

"If you please, sir, I do come from Cairnhope village. I'm old Nat Dence's daughter. There's two of us, and I'm the youngest. Squire sent me in here, because Miss said Hillsborough girls wasn't altogether honest. She is a dear kind young lady; but I do pine for home and the farm at times; and frets about the young calves: they want so much looking after. And sister, she's a-courting, and can't give her mind to 'em as should be. I'll carry the board for you, sir."

"All right," said Henry carelessly; but, as they went along, he thought to himself, "So a skilled workman passes for a gentleman with rustics: fancy that!"

On their return to the drawing-room, Henry asked for a high wooden stool, or chair, and said it would be as well to pin some newspapers over the carpet. A high stool was soon got from the kitchen, and Jael went promptly down on her knees, and crawled about, pinning the newspapers in a large square.

Henry stood apart, superior, and thought to himself, "So much for domestic servitude. What a position for a handsome girl—creeping about on all fours!"

When all was ready, he drew some Arabesque forms with his pencil on the board. He then took an exquisite little saw he had invented for this work, and fell upon the board with a rapidity that, contrasted with his previous nonchalance, looked like fury. But he was one of your fast workmen. The lithe saw seemed to twist in his hand like a serpent, and in a



very short time he had turned four feet of the board into open work. He finished the edges off with his cutting tools, and there was a transformation as complete as of linen cloth turned lace.

Grace was delighted. "Shall I ever be able to do that?"

"In half a day. That's not carving: that's trickery. The tool does it all. Before I invented this saw, a good workman would have been a day over that; but now *you* can do it in half an hour, when you are master of the instrument. And now I'll show you honest work." He took one of the knobs and examined it; then sawed off a piece, and worked on the rest so cunningly with his various cutters, that it grew into a human face before their very eyes. He even indicated Jael Dence's little flat cap by a means at once simple and ingenious. All the time he was working the women's eyes literally absorbed him: only those of Grace flashed vivid curiosity, Jael's open orbs were fixed with admiration and awe upon his supernatural cleverness.

He now drew some more Arabesques on the remaining part of the board, and told Miss Carden she must follow those outlines with the saw, and he would examine her work on Monday morning. He then went off with a quick independent air, as one whose every minute was gold.

"If you please, Miss," said Jael, "is he a real working man, or only a gentleman as makes it his pastime?"

"A gentleman! What an idea! Of course he is a working man. But a very superior person."

"To be sure," continued Jael, not quite convinced,



"he don't come up to Squire Raby; but, dear heart, he have a grander way with him than most of the Hillsborough gentlefolks as calls here."

"Nonsense!" said Grace, authoritatively. "Look at his nails."

Henry came twice a week, and his pupil made remarkable progress. She was deferential, attentive, enthusiastic.

By degrees the work led to a little conversation; and that in due course expanded into a variety of subjects; and the young lady, to her surprise, found her carver well read in History and Sciences, and severely accurate in his information, whereas her own, though abundant, was rather loose.

One day she expressed her surprise that he could have found time to be so clever with his fingers and yet cultivate his mind.

"Well," said he, "I was lucky enough to have a good mother. She taught me all she knew, and she gave me a taste for reading; and that has been the making of me: kept me out of the public-house for one thing."

"Ah! you *were* fortunate. I lost my mother, sir, when I was but eight years old."

"Oh, dear, that was a bad job," said Henry brusquely but kindly.

"A very bad job," said Grace smiling; but the next moment she suddenly turned her fair head away, and tears stole down her cheeks.

Henry looked very sorry, and Jael, without moving, looked at Grace, and opened those sluices, her eyes,



and two big drops of sympathy rolled down her comely face in a moment.

That day, when young Little shut the street door of "Woodbine Villa" and stepped into the road, a sort of dull pain seemed to traverse his chest. It made his heart ache a little, this contrast of the sweet society he had left and the smoky town towards which he now turned his face. He seemed to be ejected from Paradise for the next five days. It was Monday, yet he wished the next day was Saturday, and the intervening period could be swept away, so that he might be entering that soft Paradise instead of leaving it.

And this sentiment, once rooted, grew rapidly in an aspiring nature, and a heart that had never yet entertained a serious passion. Now the fair head that bowed over the work so near him, the lovely hand he had so often to direct, and almost to guide, and all the other perfections of mind and body this enchanting girl possessed, crept in at his admiring eyes, and began to steal into his very veins, and fill him with soft complacency. His brusque manner dissolved away, and his voice became low and soft whenever he was in her delicious presence. He spoke softly to Jael even, if Grace was there. The sturdy workman was enthralled.

Often he wondered at himself. Sometimes he felt alarmed at the strength of his passion and the direction it had taken.

"What," said he, "have I flirted with so many girls in my own way of life, and come away heart-whole, and now to fall in love with a gentlewoman,



who would bid her footman show me the door if she knew of my presumption!"

But these misgivings could neither cure him nor cow him. Let him only make money, and become a master instead of a workman, and then he would say to her, "I don't value birth myself, but if you do, why, I am not come of workpeople."

He traced a plan with workmanlike precision:—Profound discretion and self-restraint at "Woodbine Villa;" restless industry and stern self-denial in Hillsborough.

After his day's work he used to go straight to his mother. She gave him a cup of tea, and then they had their chat; and after that the sexes were inverted, so to speak: the man carved fruit, and flowers, and dead woodcocks, the woman read the news and politics of the day, and the essays on labour and capital, and any other articles not too flimsy to bear reading aloud to a man whose time was coin. (There was a free library in Hillsborough, and a mechanic could take out standard books and reviews.) Thus they passed the evening hours agreeably, and usefully too, for Henry sucked in knowledge like a leech, and at the same time carved things that sold well in London. He had a strong inclination to open his heart about Miss Carden. Accordingly, one evening he said, "She lost her mother when she was a child."

"Who lost her mother?" asked Mrs. Little.

"Miss Carden," said Henry, very softly.

The tone was not lost on Mrs. Little's fine and watchful ear; at least her mind seized it a few seconds afterwards.

"That is true," said she. "Poor girl! I re-



member hearing of it. Henry, what is that to you? Don't you trouble your head about that young lady, or she will trouble your heart. I wish you did not go near her."

And then came question upon question, and vague maternal misgivings. Henry parried them as adroitly as he could; but never mentioned Miss Carden's name again.

He thought of her all the more, and counted his gains every week, and began to inquire of experienced persons how much money was wanted to set up a wheel with steam power, and be a master instead of a man. He gathered that a stranger could hardly start fair without 500l.

"That is a good lump!" thought Henry; "but I'll have it, if I work night as well as day."

Thus inspired, his life became a sweet delirium. When he walked, he seemed to tread on air: when he forged, his hammer felt a feather in his hand. The mountains in the way looked molehills, and the rainbow tangible, to Youth, and Health, and Hope, and mighty Love.

One afternoon, as he put on his coat and crossed the yard, after a day's work that had passed like a pleasant hour, being gilded with such delightful anticipations, the foreman of the works made him a mysterious signal. Henry saw it, and followed him into his office. Bayne looked carefully out of all the doors, then closed them softly, and his face betrayed anxiety, and even fear.

"Little," said he, almost in a whisper, "you know me: I'm a man of peace, and so for love of peace I'm



going to do something that might get me into a wrangle. But you are the civilest chap ever worked under me, and the best workman, take you altogether, and I can't bear to see you kept in the dark, when you are the man whose skin——only——if I act like a man to you, will you act like one to me?"

"I will," said Henry; "there's my hand on it."

Then Bayne stepped to his desk, opened it, and took out some letters.

"You must never tell a soul I showed them you, or you will get me into a row with Cheetham; and I want to be at peace in-doors as well as out."

"I give you my word."

"Then read that, to begin."

And he handed him a letter addressed to Mr. Cheetham.

"SIR,—We beg respectfully to draw your attention to a matter, which is of a nature to cause unpleasantness between you and the Trades. We allude to your bringing a workman in from another town to do work that we are informed can be done on the premises by your own hands.

"We assure you it would be more to your interest to work in harmony with the smiths and the handle-makers in your employ, and the trade generally.

"Yours respectfully,

"THE COMMITTEE  
OF THE EDGE-TOOL FORGERS' UNION."

Henry coloured up at this, and looked grieved; but he said, "I am sorry to be the cause of any unpleasantness. But what can I do?"



"Oh," said Bayne, with a sardonic grin, "they are sure to tell you that, soon or late. Read this."

No. 2 was dated a week later, and ran thus:—

"MR. CHEETHAM, SIR—I think you do very ill to annoy a many craftsmen for one. Remember, you have suffered loss and inconvenience whenever you have gone against Trades. We had to visit you last year, and when we came your bands went and your bellows gaped. We have no wish to come again this year, if you will be reasonable. But, sir, you must part with London hand, or take consequences.

"BALAAM."

Henry looked grave. "Can I see a copy of Mr. Cheetham's reply?"

Bayne stared at him, and then laughed in his face, but without the gaiety that should accompany a laugh. "Cheetham's reply to Balaam! And where would he send it? To Mr. Beor's lodgings, No. 1, Prophet Place, Old Testament Square. My poor chap, nobody writes replies to these letters. When you get one, you go that minute to the secretary of whatever Union you are wrong with, and you don't argue, or he bids you good morning; you give in to whatever he asks, and then you get civility; and justice too, according to Trade lights. If you don't do that, and haven't learned what a blessing Peace is, why, you make up your mind to fight the Trade; and if you do, you have to fight them all; and you are safe to get the worst of it, soon or late. Cheetham has taken no notice of these letters. All the worse for him and you too. Read that."



No. 3 ran thus:—

“DEAR SIR,—I take the liberty of addressing you on the subject of your keeping on this knobstick, in defiance of them that has the power to make stones of Hillsborough too hot for you and him. Are you deaf, or blind, or a fool, Jack Cheatem? You may cheat the world, but you don’t cheat the devil, nor me. Turn cockney up, with no more ado, or you’ll both get kicked to hell some dark night by

“BALAAM’S ASS.”

Henry was silent; quite silent. When he did speak, it was to ask why Mr. Cheetham had kept all this from him.

“Because you shouldn’t take fright and leave him,” was the unhesitating reply.

“For that matter they threaten him more than they do me.”

“They warn the master first; but the workman’s turn is sure to come, and he gets it hottest, because they have so many ways of doing him. Cheetham, he lives miles from here, and rides in across country, and out again, in daylight. But the days are drawing in, and you have got to pass through these dark streets, where the Trades have a thousand friends, and you not one. Don’t you make any mistake: you are in their power; so pray don’t copy any hot-headed, wrong-headed gentleman like Cheetham, but speak them fair. Come to terms—if you can—and let us be at peace; sweet, balmy, peace.”

“Peace is a good thing no doubt,” said Henry, “but” (rather bitterly) “I don’t thank Cheetham for



letting me run blindfold into trouble, and me a stranger."

"Oh," said Bayne, "he is no worse than the rest, believe me. What does any master care for a man's life? Profit and loss go down in figures; but life—that's a cypher in all their ledgers."

"Oh, come," said Henry, "it is unphilosophical and narrow-minded to fasten on a class the faults of a few individuals, that form a very moderate portion of that class."

Bayne seemed staggered by a blow so polysyllabic; and Henry, to finish him, added, "Where there's a multitude, there's a mixture." Now the first sentence he had culled from the *Edinburgh Review*, and the second he had caught from a fellow-workman's lips in a public-house; and probably this was the first time the pair of phrases had ever walked out of any man's mouth arm in arm. He went on to say, "And as for Cheet-ham, he is not a bad fellow, take him altogether. But you are a better for telling me the truth. Forewarned, forearmed."

He went home thoughtful, and not so triumphant and airy as yesterday; but still not dejected, for his young and manly mind summoned its energy and spirit to combat this new obstacle, and his wits went to work.

Being unable to sleep for thinking of what he should do, he was the first to reach the works in the morning. He lighted his furnace, and then went and unlocked the room where he worked as a handle-maker, and also as a cutler. He entered briskly, and opened the window. The grey light of the morning came in, and showed him something on the inside of



the door that was not there when he locked it overnight. It was a very long knife, broad towards the handle, but keenly pointed, and double-edged. It was fast in the door, and impaled a letter addressed, in a vile hand—

“To JAK THRE TRADES.”

Henry took hold of the handle to draw the knife out; but the formidable weapon had been driven clean through the door with a single blow.

Then Henry drew back, and as the confusion of surprise cleared away, the whole thing began to grow on him, and reveal distinct and alarming features.

The knife was not one which the town manufactured in the way of business. It was a long glittering blade, double-edged, finely pointed, and exquisitely tempered. It was not a tool, but a weapon.

Why was it there, and, above all, how did it come there?

He distinctly remembered locking the door overnight. Indeed, he had found it locked, and the window-shutters bolted; yet there was this deadly weapon, and on its point a letter, the superscription of which looked hostile and sinister.

He drew the note gently across the edge of the keen knife, and the paper parted like a cobweb. He took it to the window and read it. It ran thus:—

“This knifs wun of too made ekspres t’other is for thy hart if thou dosent harken Trade and leve Chetm. is thy skin thicks dore thinks thou if not turn up and back to Lundon or I cum again and rip thy — car-kiss with feloe blade to this thou — cokny.

“SLIPER JACK.”



## CHAPTER IV.

ANY one who reads it by the fireside may smile at the incongruous mixture of a sanguinary menace with bad spelling. But deeds of blood had often followed these scrawls in Hillsborough, and Henry knew it; and, indeed, he who cannot spell his own name correctly, is the very man to take his neighbour's life without compunction; since mercy is a fruit of knowledge, and cruelty of ignorance.

And then there was something truly chilling in the mysterious entrance of this threat on a dagger's point into a room he had locked overnight. It implied supernatural craft and power. After this, where could a man be safe from these all-penetrating and remorseless agents of a secret and irresponsible tribunal?

Henry sat down awhile, and pored over the sanguinary scrawl, and glanced from it with a shudder at the glittering knife. And, while he was in this state of temporary collapse the works filled, the Power moved, the sonorous grindstones revolved, and every man worked at his ease, except one, the best of them all beyond comparison.

He went to his friend Bayne, and said in a broken voice, "They have put me in heart for work; given me a morning dram. Look here." Bayne was shocked, but not surprised. "It is the regular routine," said he. "They begin civil; but if you don't obey, they turn it over to the scum."

"Do you think my life is really in danger?"

"No, not yet; I never knew a man molested on



one warning. This is just to frighten you. If you were to take no notice, you'd likely get another warning, or two, at most; and then they'd do you, as sure as a gun."

"Do me?"

"Oh, that is the Hillsborough word. It means to disable a man from work. Sometimes they lie in wait in these dark streets, and fracture his skull with life-preservers; or break his arm, or cut the sinew of his wrist; and that they call *doing* him. Or, if it is a grinder, they'll put powder in his trough, and then the sparks of his own making fire it, and scorch him, and perhaps blind him for life; that's *doing* him. They have gone as far as shooting men with shot, and even with a bullet, but never so as to kill the man dead on the spot. They *do* him. They are skilled workmen, you know: well, they are skilled workmen at violence and all, and it is astonishing how they contrive to stop within an inch of murder. They'll chance it though sometimes with their favourite gunpowder. If you're very wrong with the trade, and they can't *do* you any other way, they'll blow your house up from the cellar, or let a can of powder down the chimney, with a lighted fuse, or fling a petard in at the window, and they take the chance of killing a houseful of innocent people, to get at the one that's on the black books of the trade, and has to be *done*."

"The beasts! I'll buy a six-shooter. I'll meet craft with craft, and force with force."

"What can you do against ten thousand? No: go you at once to the Secretary of the Edge-Tool Grinders, and get your trade into his union. You



will have to pay; but don't mind that. Cheetham will go halves."

"I'll go at dinner-time."

"And why not now?"

"Because," said Henry, with a candour all his own, "I'm getting over my fright a bit, and my blood is beginning to boil at being threatened by a sneak, who wouldn't stand before me one moment in that yard, knife or no knife."

Bayne smiled a friendly but faint smile, and shook his head with grave disapprobation, and said, with wonder, "Fancy postponing Peace!"

Henry went to his forge, and worked till dinner-time. Nay, more, he was a beautiful whistler, and always whistled a little at his work; so to-day he whistled a great deal: in fact, he over-whistled.

At dinner-time he washed his face and hands, and put on his coat to go out.

But he had soon some reason to regret that he had not acted on Bayne's advice to the letter. There had been a large trades' meeting overnight, and the hostility to the London craftsman had spread more widely in consequence of remarks that had been there made. This emboldened the lower class of workmen, who already disliked him out of pure envy, and had often scowled at him in silence; and now, as he passed them, they spoke at him, in their peculiar language, which the great friend and supporter of mechanics in general, *The Hillsborough Liberal*, subsequently christened "THE DASH DIALECT."

"We want no ——— cockneys here, to steal our work."



"Did ever a —— anvil man handle his own blades in Hillsborough?"

"Not till this —— knobstick came," said another.

Henry turned sharp round upon them haughtily, and, such was the power of his prompt defiant attitude, and his eye, which flashed black lightning, that there was a slight movement of recoil among the actual speakers. They recovered it immediately, strong in numbers; but in that same moment Little also recovered his discretion, and he had the address to step briskly towards the gate and call out the porter; he said to him in rather a loud voice, for all to hear, "If anybody asks for Henry Little, say he has gone to the Secretary of the Edge-Tool Forgers' Union." He then went out of the works; but, as he went, he heard some respectable workman say to the scum, "Come, shut up now. It is in better hands than yours."

Mr. Jobson, the Secretary of the Edge-Tool Forgers, was not at home, but his servant-girl advised Little to try the "Rising Sun;" and in the parlour of that orb he found Mr. Jobson, in company with other magnates of the same class, discussing a powerful leader of the *Hillsborough Liberal*, in which was advocated the extension of the franchise, a measure calculated to throw prodigious power into the hands of Hillsborough operatives, because of their great number, and their habit of living each workman in a tenement of his own, however small.

Little waited till *The Liberal* had received its meed of approbation, and then asked respectfully if he might speak to Mr. Jobson on a trade matter. "Certainly," said Mr. Jobson. "Who are you?"



"My name is Little. I make the carving-tools at Cheetham's."

"I'll go home with you; my house is hard by."

When they got to the house, Jobson told him to sit down, and asked him, in a smooth and well-modulated voice, what was the nature of the business. This query, coming from him, who had set the stone rolling that bade fair to crush him, rather surprised Henry. He put his hand into his pocket, and produced the threatening note, but said nothing as to the time or manner of its arrival.

Mr. Jobson perused it carefully, and then returned it to Henry. "What have we to do with this?" and he looked quite puzzled.

"Why, sir, it is the act of your Union."

"You are sadly misinformed, Mr. Little. *We never threaten.* All we do is to remind the master that, if he does not do certain things, certain other things will probably be done by us; and this we wrap up in the kindest way."

"But, sir, you wrote to Cheetham against me."

"Did we? Then it will be in my letter-book." He took down a book, examined it, and said, "You are quite right. Here's a copy of the letter. Now surely, sir, comparing the language, the manners, and the spelling, with that of the ruffian whose scrawl you received this morning——"

"Then you disown the ruffian's threat, sir?"

"Most emphatically. And if you can trace it home, he shall smart for interfering in our business."

"Oh, if the trade disowns the blackguard, I can despise him. But you can't wonder at my thinking all these letters were steps of the same—yes, and Mr.



Bayne thought so too; for he said this was the regular routine, and ends in *doing* a poor fellow for gaining his bread."

Mr. Jobson begged to explain.

"Many complaints are brought to us, who advise the trades. When they are frivolous, we are unwilling to disturb the harmony of employers and workmen; we reason with the complainant, and the thing dies away. When the grievance is substantial, we take it out of the individual's hands, and lay it before the working committee. A civil note is sent to the master; or a respectable member of the committee calls on him, and urges him to redress the grievance, but always in kind and civil terms. The master generally assents; experience has taught him it is his wisest course. But if he refuses, we are bound to report the refusal to a larger committee, and sometimes a letter emanates from them, reminding the master that he has been a loser before by acts of injustice, and hinting that he may be a loser again. I don't quite approve this form of communication. But certainly it has often prevented the mischief from spreading farther. Well, but perhaps he continues rebellious. What follows? We can't lock up facts that affect the trade; we are bound to report the case at the next general meeting. It excites comments, some of them perhaps a little intemperate; the lower kind of workmen get inflamed with passion, and often, I am sorry to say, write ruffianly letters, and now and then do ruffianly acts, which disgrace the town, and are strongly reprobated by us. Why, Mr. Little, it has been my lot to send a civil remonstrance, written with my own hand, in pretty fair English—for a man who plied bellows and



hammer twenty years of my life—and be treated with silent contempt; and two months after, to be offering a reward of twenty or thirty pounds, for the discovery of some misguided man, that had taken on himself to right this very matter with a can of gunpowder, or some such coarse expedient.”

“Yes, but, sir, what hurts me is, you didn’t consider me to be worth a civil note. You only remonstrated with Cheetham.”

“You can’t wonder at that. Our trade hasn’t been together many years: and what drove us together? The tyranny of our employers. What has kept us together? The bitter experience of hard work and little pay, whenever we were out of union. Those, who now direct the trades, are old enough to remember when we were all ground down to the dust by the greedy masters; and therefore it is natural, when a grievance arises, we should be inclined to look to those old offenders for redress in the first instance. Sometimes the masters convince us the fault lies with workmen; and then we trouble the master no more than we are forced to do in order to act upon the offenders. But, to come to the point; what is your proposal?”

“I beg to be admitted into the union.”

“What union?”

“Why, of course, the one I have offended, through ignorance. The edge-tool forgers.”

Jobson shook his head, and said he feared there were one or two objections.

Henry saw it was no use bidding low. “I’ll pay 15*l.* down,” said he, “and I’ll engage not to draw relief from your fund, unless disabled by accident or violence.”



"I will submit your offer to the trade," said Jobson. He added, "Then there I conclude the matter rests for the present."

Henry interpreted this to mean that he had nothing to apprehend, unless his proposal should be rejected. He put the 15*l.* down on the table, though Mr. Jobson told him that was premature, and went off as light as a feather. Being nice and clean, and his afternoon's work spoiled, he could not resist the temptation; he went to "Woodbine Villa." He found Miss Carden at home, and she looked quietly pleased at his unexpected arrival; but Jael's colour came and went, and her tranquil bosom rose and fell slowly, but grandly, for a minute, as she lowered her head over her work.

This was a heavenly change to Henry Little. Away from the deafening workshop, and the mean jealousies and brutality of his inferiors, who despised him, to the presence of a beautiful and refined girl, who was his superior, yet did not despise him. From sin to purity, from dirt to cleanliness, from war to peace, from vilest passions to Paradise.

Her smile had never appeared so fascinating, her manner never so polite yet placid. How softly and comfortably she and her ample dress nestled into the corner of the sofa and fitted it! How white her nimble hand! how bright her delicious face! How he longed to kiss her exquisite hand, or her little foot, or her hem, or the ground she walked on, or something she had touched, or her eye had dwelt on.

But he must not even think too much of such delights, lest he should show his heart too soon. So, after a short lesson, he proposed to go into the lumber-



room and find something to work upon. "Yes, do," said Grace. "I would go too; but no; it was my palace of delights for years, and its treasures inexhaustible. I will not go to be robbed of one more illusion. It is just possible I might find it really is what the profane in this house call it—a lumber room—and not what memory paints it, a temple of divine curiosities." And so she sent them off, and set herself to feel old—"Oh, so old."

And presently Henry came back, laden with a great wooden bust of Erin, that had been the figure-head of a wrecked schooner; and set it down, and told her he should carve that into a likeness of herself, and she must do her share of the work.

Straightway she forgot she was worn out; and clapped her hands, and her eyes sparkled. And the floor was prepared, and Henry went to work like one inspired, and the chips flew in every direction, and the paint was chiselled away in no time, and the wood proved soft and kindly, and just the colour of a delicate skin, and Henry said, "The Greek Statues, begging their pardons, have all got hair like mops; but this shall have real hair, like your own; and the silk dress, with the gloss on; and the lace: but the face, the expression, how can I ever——?"

"Oh, never mind *them*," cried Grace. "Jael, this is too exciting. Please go and tell them 'not at home' to anybody."

Then came a pretty picture: the workman, with his superb hand, brown and sinewy, yet elegant and shapely as a Duchess's, and the fingers almost as taper, and his black eye that glowed like a coal over the model, which grew under his masterly strokes, now



hard, now light: the enchanting girl who sat to him, and seemed on fire with curiosity and innocent admiration: and the simple rural beauty, that plied the needle, and beamed mildly with demure happiness, and shot a shy glance upward now and then.

Yes, Love was at his old mischievous game.

Henry now lived in secret for Grace Carden, and Jael was garnering Henry into her devoted heart, unobserved by the object of her simple devotion. Yet, of the three, these two, that loved with so little encouragement, were the happiest. To them the world was Heaven this glorious afternoon. Time, strewing roses as he went, glided so sweetly and so swiftly, that they started with surprise, when the horizontal beams glorified the windows, and told them the brightest day of their lives was drawing to its end.

Ah, stay a little while longer for them, Western Sun. Stand still, not as in the cruel days of old, to glare upon poor, beaten, wounded, panting warriors, and rob them of their last chance, the shelter of the night; but to prolong these holy rapturous hours of youth, and hope, and first love in bosoms unsullied by the world—the golden hours of life, that glow so warm, and shine so bright, and fleet so soon; and return in this world——Never more!

## CHAPTER V.

HENRY LITTLE began this bust in a fervid hour, and made great progress the first day: but, as the work grew on him, it went slower and slower; for his ambitious love drove him to attempt beauties of execution



that were without precedent in this kind of wood-carving; and, on the other hand, the fastidiousness of a true craftsman made him correct his attempts again and again. As to those mechanical parts which he entrusted at first to his pupil, she fell so far short of his ideal even in these, that he told her bluntly she must strike work for the present; he could not have *this* spoiled.

Grace thought it hard she might not be allowed to spoil her own image; however, she submitted, and henceforth her lesson was confined to looking on. And she did look on with interest, and, at last, with profound admiration. Hitherto she had thought, with many other persons, that, if a man's hand was the stronger, a woman's was the neater: but now she saw the same hand, which had begun by hewing away the coarse outlines of the model, bestow touches of the chisel so unerring and effective, yet so exquisitely delicate, that she said to herself, "No woman's hand could be so firm, yet so feather-like, as all this."

And the result was as admirable as the process. The very texture of the ivory forehead began to come under those master-touches, executed with perfect and various instruments: and, for the first time perhaps in the history of this art, a bloom, more delicate than that of a plum, crept over the dimpled cheek. But, indeed, when love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.

Henry worked on it four afternoons, the happiest he had ever known. There was a natural pleasure of creating, and the distinct glory and delight of reproducing features so beloved; and to these joys were added the pleasure of larger conversation. The model



gave Grace many opportunities of making remarks, or asking questions, and Henry contrived to say so many things in answer to one. Sculptor and sitter made acquaintance with each other's minds over the growing bust.

And then young ladies and gentlemen dropped in, and gazed, and said such wonderfully silly things, and thereby left their characters behind them as fruitful themes for conversation. In short, topics were never wanting now.

As for Jael, she worked, and beamed, and pondered every word her idol uttered, but seldom ventured to say anything till he was gone, and then she prattled fast enough about him.

The work drew near completion. The hair, not in ropes, as heretofore, but its silken threads boldly and accurately shown, yet not so as to cord the mass, and unsatin it quite. The silk dress; the lace collar; the blooming cheek, with its every dimple and incident; all these were completed, and one eyebrow, a masterpiece in itself. This carved eyebrow was a revelation, and made everybody who saw it wonder at the conventional substitutes they had hitherto put up with in statuary of all sorts, when the eyebrow itself is so beautiful, and might, it seems, have been imitated, instead of libelled, all these centuries.

But beautiful works, and pleasant habits, seem particularly liable to interruption. Just when the one eyebrow was finished, and when Jael Dence had come to look on Saturday and Monday as the only real days in the week, and when even Grace Carden was brighter on those days, and gliding into a gentle complacent



custom, suddenly a Saturday came and went, but Little did not appear.

Jael was restless.

Grace was disappointed, but contented to wait till Monday.

Monday came and went, but no Henry Little.

Jael began to fret and sigh; and, after two more blank weeks, she could bear the mystery no longer. "If you please, Miss," said she, "shall I go to that place where he works?"

"Where who works?" inquired Grace, rather disingenuously.

"Why, the dark young man, Miss," said Jael, blushing deeply.

Grace reflected, and curiosity struggled with discretion; but discretion got the better, being aided by self-respect. "No, Jael," said she; "he is charming, when he is here; but, when he gets away, he is not always so civil as he might be. I had to go twice after him. I shall not go nor send a third time. It really is too bad of him."

"Dear heart," pleaded Jael, "mayhap he is not well."

"Then he ought to write and say so. No, no; he is a radical, and full of conceit: and he has done this one eyebrow, and then gone off laughing and saying, 'Now let us see if the gentry can do the other amongst them.' If he doesn't come soon, I'll do the other eyebrow myself."

"Mayhap he will never come again," sighed Jael.

"Oh, yes, he will," said Grace, mighty cunningly; "he is as fond of coming here as we are of having him."



Not that I'm at all surprised; for the fact is you are very pretty, extremely pretty, abominably pretty."

"I might pass in Cairnhope town," said Jael, modestly, "but not here. The moon goes for nought when the sun is there. He don't come here for me."

This sudden elegance of language, and Jael's tone of dignified despondency, silenced Grace, somehow, and made her thoughtful. She avoided the subject for several days. Indeed, when Saturday came, not a word was said about the defaulter: it was only by her sending for Jael to sit with her, and by certain looks, and occasional restlessness, she betrayed the slightest curiosity or expectation.

Jael sat and sewed, and often looked quickly up at the window, as some footstep passed, and then looked down again and sighed.

Young Little never came. He seemed to have disappeared from both their lives; quietly disappeared.

Next day, Sunday, Jael came to Miss Carden, after morning church, and said, meekly, "If you please, Miss, may I go home?"

"Oh, certainly," said Grace, a little haughtily. "What for?"

Jael hung her head, and said she was not used to be long away. Then she lifted her head, and her great candid eyes, and spoke more frankly. "I feel to be drawed home. Something have been at me all the night to that degree as I couldn't close my eyes. I could almost feel it, like a child's hand, a pulling me East. I'm afeard father's ill, or maybe the calves are bleating for me, that is better acquaint with them than sister Patty is. And Hillsborough air don't seem to 'gree with me now not altogether as it did at first. If



you please, Miss, to let me go; and then I'll come back when I'm better company than I be now. Oh dear! Oh, dear!"

"Why, Jael, my poor girl, what is the matter?"

"I don't know, Miss. But I feel very unked."

"Are you not happy with me?"

"'Tis no fault of yourn, Miss," said Jael, rustic, but womanly.

"Then you are *not* happy here."

No reply, but two clear eyes began to fill to the very brim.

Grace coaxed her, and said, "Speak to me like a friend. You know, after all, you are not my servant. I can't possibly part with you altogether; I have got to like you so: but, of course, you shall go home for a little while, if you wish it very, very much."

"Indeed I do, Miss," said Jael. "Please forgive me, but my heart feels like lead in my bosom." And, with these words, the big tears ran over, and chased one another down her cheeks.

Then Grace, who was very kind-hearted, begged her, in a very tearful voice, not to cry: she should go home for a week, a fortnight, a month even. "There, there, you shall go to-morrow, poor thing."

Now it is a curious fact, that looks like animal magnetism or something, but the farmhouse, to which Jael had felt so mysteriously drawn all night, contained, at that moment, besides its usual inmates, one Henry Little: and how he came there is an important part of this tale, which I must deal with at once.

While Henry was still visiting Woodbine Villa, as



related above, events of a very different character from those soft scenes were taking place at the works. His liberal offer to the Edge-Tool Forgers had been made about a week, when, coming back one day from dinner to his forge, he found the smoky wall written upon with chalk, in large letters, neatly executed—

*"Why overlook the Handlers?"*

*"MARY."*

He was not alarmed this time, but vexed. He went and complained to Bayne; and that worthy came directly and contemplated the writing, in silence, for about a minute. Then he gave a weary sigh, and said, with doleful resignation, "Take the chalk, and write. There it is."

Henry took the chalk, and prepared to write Bayne's mind underneath Mary's. Bayne dictated:—

*"I have offered the Handlers the same as the Forgers."*

"But that is not true," objected Henry, turning round, with the chalk in his hand.

"It will be true, in half an hour. We are going to Parkin, the Handlers' Secretary."

"What, another 15%! This is an infernal swindle."

"What isn't?" said Bayne, cynically.

Henry then wrote as desired; and they went together to Mr. Parkin.

Mr. Parkin was not at home. But they hunted him from pillar to post, and caught him, at last, in the bar-parlour of "The Pack-saddle." He knew Bayne well,



and received him kindly, and, on his asking for a private interview, gave a wink to two persons who were with him: they got up directly, and went out.

"What, is there anything amiss between you and the trade?" inquired Mr. Parkin, with an air of friendly interest.

Bayne smiled, not graciously, but sourly: "Come, come, sir, that is a farce you and I have worn out this ten years. This is the London workman himself, come to excuse himself to Mary and Co., for not applying to them before: and the long and the short is, he offers the Handlers the same as he has the Smiths, fifteen down, and to pay his natty money, but draw no scale, unless disabled. What d'ye say? Yes, or no?"

"I'll lay Mr. Little's proposal before the committee."

"Thank you, sir," said Little. "And, meantime, I suppose I may feel safe against violence, from the members of your union?"

"Violence!" said Mr. Parkin, turning his eye inwards, as if he was interrogating the centuries. Then to Mr. Bayne, "Pray, sir, do you remember any deed of darkness that our union have ever committed, since we have been together; and that is twelve years?"

"*Well*, Mr. Parkin," said Bayne, "if you mean deeds of blood, and deeds of gunpowder, etcetera—why, no, not one: and it is greatly to your honour. But, mind you, if a master wants his tanks tapped and his hardening-liquor run into the shore, or his bellows to be ripped, his axle-nuts to vanish, his wheel-bands to go and hide in a drain or a church belfry, and his scythe-blades to dive into a wheel-dam, he has only to be wrong with your union, and he'll be accommodated as above. I speak from experience."



"Oh, rattening!" said Mr. Parkin. "That is a mighty small matter."

"It is small to you, that are not in the oven, where the bread is baked, or cooled, or burnt. But whatever parts the grindstones from the Power, and the bellows from the air, and the air from the fire, makes a hole in the master's business to-day, and a hole in the workmen's pocket that day six months. So, for Heaven's sake let us be right with you. Little's is the most friendly and liberal offer that any workmen ever made to any union. Do, pray, close with it, and let us be at peace; sweet—balmy—peace."

Parkin declared he shared that desire: but was not the committee. Then, to Henry: "I shall put your case as favourably as my conscience will let me. Meantime, of course, the matter rests as it is."

They then parted; and Henry, as he returned home, thanked Bayne heartily. He said this second 15 $\frac{1}{2}$  had been a bitter pill at first; but now he was glad he had offered it. "I would not leave Hillsborough for fifteen hundred pounds."

Two days after this promising interview with Mr. Parkin, Henry received a note, the envelope of which showed him it came from Mr. Jobson. He opened it eagerly, and with a good hope that its object was to tell him he was now a member of the Edge-Tool Forgers' Union.

The letter, however, ran thus:—

"DEAR SIR,—I hear, with considerable surprise, that you continue to forge blades and make handles for Mr. Cheetham. On receipt of this information I went immediately to Mr. Parkin, and he assured me



that he came to the same terms with you as I did. He says he intimated politely, but plainly, that he should expect you not to make any more carving-tool handles for Mr. Cheetham, till his committee had received your proposal. He now joins me in advising you to strike work for the present. Hillsborough is surrounded by beautiful scenes, which it might gratify an educated workman to inspect, during the unavoidable delay caused by the new and very important questions your case has raised.

“Yours obediently,

“SAML. JOBSON.

“P.S.—A respectable workman was with me yesterday, and objected that you receive from Mr. Cheetham a higher payment than the list price. Can you furnish me with a reply to this, as it is sure to be urged at the trade meeting.”

When he read this, Little's blood boiled, especially at the cool advice to lay down his livelihood, and take up scenery: and he dashed off a letter of defiance. He showed it to Bayne, and it went into the fire directly. “That is all right,” said this worthy. “You have written your mind, like a man. Now sit down, and give them treacle for their honey—or you'll catch pepper.”

Henry groaned, and writhed, but obeyed.

He had written his defiance in three minutes. It took him an hour to produce the following:—

“DEAR SIR,—I am sorry for the misunderstanding. I did not, for a moment, attach that meaning to anything that fell either from you or Mr. Parkin.



"I must now remind you that, were I to strike work entirely, Mr. Cheetham could discharge me, and even punish me, for breach of contract. All I can do is to work fewer hours than I have done: and I am sure you will be satisfied with that, if you consider that the delay in the settlement of this matter rests with you, and not with me.

"I am yours respectfully,  
"HENRY LITTLE.

"I furnish you, as requested, with two replies to the objection of a respectable workman that I am paid above the list price.

"1.—To sell skilled labour below the statement price, is a just offence, and injury to trade. But to obtain above the statement price is to benefit trade. The high price, that stands alone to-day, will not stand alone for ever. It gets quoted in bargains, and draws prices up to it. That has been proved a thousand times.

"2.—It is not under any master's skin to pay a man more than he is worth. If I get a high price, it is because I make a first-rate article. If a man has got superior knowledge, he is not going to give it away to gratify envious Ignorance."

To this, in due course, he received from Jobson the following:—

"DEAR SIR,—I advised you, according to my judgment and experience; but, doubtless, you are the best judge of your own affairs."



And that closed the correspondence with the Secretaries.

The gentle Jobson and the polite Parkin had retired from the correspondence with their air of mild regret and placid resignation just three days, when young Little found a dirty crumpled letter on his anvil, written in pencil. It ran thus:—

“Turn up or youl wish you had droped it. Youl be made so as youl never do hands turn agin, an never know what hurt you.

(Signed) “MOONRAKER.”

Henry swore.

When he had sworn, (and, as a Briton, I think he had denied himself that satisfaction long enough,) he caught up a strip of steel with his pincers, shoved it into the coals, heated it, and, in half a minute, forged two long steel nails. He then nailed this letter to his wall, and wrote under it in chalk, “I offer 10*l.* reward to any one who will show me the coward who wrote this, but was afraid to sign it. The writing is peculiar, and can easily be identified.”

He also took the knife that had been so ostentatiously fixed in his door, and carried it about him night and day, with a firm resolve to use it in self-defence, if necessary.

And now the plot thickened: the decent workmen in Cheetham's works were passive; they said nothing offensive, but had no longer the inclination, even if they had the power, to interfere and restrain the lower workmen from venting their envy and malice. Scarcely



a day passed without growls and scowls. But Little went his way haughtily, and affected not to see, nor hear them.

However, one day, at dinner-time, he happened, unluckily, to be detained by Bayne in the yard, when the men came out; and two or three of the roughs took this opportunity and began on him at once, in the Dash Dialect, of course; they knew no other.

A great burly forger, whose red matted hair was powdered with coal-dust, and his face bloated with habitual intemperance, planted himself insolently before Henry, and said, in a very loud voice, "How many more trade meetings are we to have for one——knobstick?"

Henry replied, in a moment, "Is it my fault if your shilly-shallying committees can't say yes or no to 15/-? You'd say yes to it, wouldn't you, sooner than go to bed sober?"

This sally raised a loud laugh at the notorious drunkard's expense, and checked the storm, as a laugh generally does.

But men were gathering round, and a workman who had heard the raised voices, and divined the row, ran out of the works, with his apron full of blades, and his heart full of mischief. It was a grinder of a certain low type, peculiar to Hillsborough, but quite common there, where grinders are often the grandchildren of grinders. This degenerate face was more canine than human; sharp as a hatchet, and with forehead villanously low; hardly any chin; and—most characteristic trait of all—the eyes, pale in colour, and tiny in size, appeared to have come close together, to consult, and then to have run back into the very skull,



to get away from the sparks, which their owner, and his sire, and his grandsire, had been eternally creating.

This greyhound of a grinder flung down a lot of dull bluish blades, warm from the forge, upon a condemned grindstone that was lying in the yard; and they tinkled.

"—— me, if I grind cockney blades!" said he.

This challenge fired a sympathetic handle-maker. "Grinders are right," said he. "We must be a—— mean lot and all, to handle his —— work."

"He has been warned enough; but he heeds none."

"Hoostle him out o' works."

"Nay, hit him o'er th' head and fling him into t' shore."

With these menacing words, three or four roughs advanced on him, with wicked eyes; and the respectable workmen stood, like stone statues, in cold and terrible neutrality; and Henry, looking round, in great anxiety, found that Bayne had withdrawn.

He ground his teeth, and stepped back to the wall, to have all his assailants in the front. He was sternly resolute, though very pale, and, by a natural impulse, put his hand into his side-pocket, to feel if he had a weapon. The knife was there, the deadly blade with which his enemies themselves had armed him; and, to those who could read faces, there was death in the pale cheek and gleaming eye of this young man, so sorely tried.

At this moment, a burly gentleman walked into the midst of them, as smartly as Van Amburgh amongst his tigers, and said steadily, "What is to do now, lads?" It was Cheetham himself. Bayne knew he was in the office, and had run for him, in mortal



terror, and sent him to keep the peace. "They insult me, sir," said Henry; "though I am always civil to them; and that grinder refuses to grind my blades, there."

"Is that so? Step out, my lad. Did you refuse to grind those blades?"

"Ay," said the greyhound-man, sullenly.

"Then put on your coat, and leave my premises this minute."

"He is entitled to a week's warning, Mr. Cheetham," said one of the decent workmen, respectfully, but resolutely; speaking now for the first time.

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Mr. Cheetham, in exactly the same tone. (No stranger could have divined the speakers were master and man.) "He has vitiated his contract by publicly refusing to do his work. He'll get nothing from me but his wages up to noon this day. But *you* can have a week's warning, if you want it."

"Nay, sir. I've nought against you, for my part. But they say it will come to that, if you don't turn Little up."

"Why, what's his fault? Come now; you are a man. Speak up."

"Nay, I've no quarrel with the man. But he isn't straight with the trade."

"That is the secretaries' fault, not mine," said Henry. "They can't see I've brought a new trade in, that hurts no old trade, and will spread, and bring money into the town."

"We are not so —— soft as swallow that," said the bloated smith. "Thou's just come t' Hillsborough



to learn forging, and when thou'st mastered that, off to London, and take thy —— trade with thee."

Henry coloured to the brow at the inferior workman's vanity and its concomitant, detraction. But he governed himself, by a mighty effort, and said, "Oh, that's your grievance now, is it? Mr. Cheetham—sir—will you ask some respectable grinder to examine these blades of mine?"

"Certainly. You are right, Little. The man to judge a forger's work is a grinder, and not another forger. Reynolds, just take a look at them, will ye?"

A wet grinder of a thoroughly different type and race from the greyhound, stepped forward. He was thick-set in body, fresh-coloured, and of a square manly countenance. He examined the blades carefully, and with great interest.

"Well," said Henry, "were they forged by a smith, or a novice that is come here to learn anvil work?"

Reynolds did not reply to him, nor to Mr. Cheetham: he turned to the men. "Mates, I'm none good at lying. Hand that forged these has nought to learn in Hillsboro', nor any other shop."

"Thank you, Mr. Reynolds," said Henry, in a choking voice: "that is the first gleam of justice that I——" He could say no more.

"Come, don't you turn soft for a word or two," said Cheetham. "You'll wear all this out in time. Go to the office. I have something to say to you."

The something was soon said. It amounted to this—"Stand by me, and I will stand by you."

"Well, sir," said Henry, "I think I must leave you if the committees refuse my offer. It is hard for one man to fight a couple of trades in such a place as this.



But I'm firm in one thing: until those that govern the unions say 'no' to my offer, I shall go on working, and the scum of the trades shan't frighten me away from my forge."

"That's right; let the blackguards bluster. Bayne tells me you have had another anonymous."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, look here: you must take care of yourself, outside the works; but I'll take care of you inside. Here, Bayne, write a notice that, if any man molests, intimidates, or affronts Mr. Little, in my works, I'll take him myself to the town-hall, and get him two months directly. Have somebody at the gate, to put a printed copy of that into every man's hand as he leaves."

"Thank you, sir!" said Henry, warmly. "But ought not the police to afford me protection, outside?"

"The police! You might as well go to the beadle. No; change your lodging, if you think they know it. Don't let them track you home. Buy a brace of pistols, and, if they catch you in a dark place, and try to do you, give them a barrel or two before they can strike a blow. Not one of *them* will ever tell the police, not if you shot his own brother dead at that game. The law is a dead letter here, sir. You've nothing to expect from it, and nothing to fear."

"Good heavens! Am I in England?"

"In England? No. You are in Hillsborough."

This epigram put Cheetham in good humour with himself, and, when Henry told him he did not feel quite safe, even in his own forge, nor in his handling-room, and gave his reasons, "Oh," said cheerful



Cheetham, "that is nothing. Yours is a box-lock; the blackguard will have hid in the works at night, and taken the lock off, left his writing, and then screwed the lock on again: that is nothing to any Hillsborough hand. But I'll soon stop that game. Go you to Chestnut Street, and get two first-class Bramah locks. There's a pocket-knife forge upstairs, close to your handling-room. I'll send the pocket-knife hand downstairs, and you fasten the Bramah locks on both doors, and keep the keys yourself. See to that now at once: then your mind will be easy. And I shall be in the works all day now, and every day; come to me directly, if there is anything fresh."

Henry's forge was cold, by this time; so he struck work, and spent the afternoon in securing his two rooms with the Bramah locks. He also took Cheetham's advice, in another particular. Instead of walking home, he took a cab, and got the man to drive rapidly to a certain alley. There he left the cab, ran down the alley, and turned a corner, and went home round about. He doubled like a hare, and dodged like a criminal evading justice.

But the next morning he felt a pleasing sense of security when he opened his forge-room with the Bramah key, and found no letters nor threats of any kind had been able to penetrate.

Moreover, all this time you will understand he was visiting "Woodbine Cottage" twice a week, and carving Grace Carden's bust.

Those delightful hours did much to compensate him for his troubles in the town, and were even of some service to him in training him to fence with the trades of Hillsborough: for at "Woodbine Villa" he had to



keep an ardent passion within the strict bounds of reverence, and in the town he had constantly to curb another passion, wrath, and keep it within the bounds of prudence. These were kindred exercises of self-restraint, and taught him self-government beyond his years. But what he benefited most by, after all, was the direct and calming effect upon his agitated heart, and irritated nerves, that preceded, and accompanied, and followed these sweet, tranquillizing visits. They were soft, solacing, and soothing; they were periodical, and certain. He could count on leaving his cares, and worries, twice every week, at the door of that dear villa; and, when he took them up again, they were no longer the same; heavenly balm had been shed over them, and over his boiling blood.

One Saturday he heard, by a side-wind, that the unions at a general meeting had debated his case, and there had been some violent speeches, and no decision come to; but the majority adverse to him. This discouraged him sadly, and his yearning heart turned all the more towards his haven of rest, and the hours, few but blissful, that awaited him.

About eleven o'clock, that same day, the postman brought him a letter, so vilely addressed, that it had been taken to two or three places, on speculation, before it reached its destination.

Little saw at once it was another anonymous communication. But he was getting callous to these missives, and he even took it with a certain degree of satisfaction. "Well done, Bramah! Obligated to send their venom by post now." This was the feeling uppermost in his mind. In short, he opened the letter with as much contempt as anger.



But he had no sooner read the foul scrawl, than his heart died within him.

"Thou's sharp but not sharp enow. We know where thou goes coorting up hill. Window is all glass and ripe for a Peter shall blow the house tatum. There's the stuff in Hillsbro and the men that have done others so, and will do her job as wells thine. Powders a good servant but a bad master.

"ONE WHO MEANS DOING WHAT HE SAYS."

At this diabolical threat, young Little leaned sick and broken over the handle of his bellows.

Then he got up, and went to Mr. Cheetham, and said, patiently, "Sir, I am sorry to say I must leave you this very day."

"Don't say that, Little, don't say that."

"Oh, it is with a heavy heart, sir; and I shall always remember your kindness. But a man knows when he is beat. And I'm beat now." He hung his head in silence awhile. Then he said, in a faint voice, "This is what has done it, sir," and handed him the letter.

Mr. Cheetham examined it, and said, "I am not surprised at your being taken aback by this. But it's nothing new to us; we have all been threatened in this form. Why, the very last time I fought the trades, my wife was threatened I should be brought home on a shutter, with my intestines sweeping the ground. That was the purport, only it was put vernacular and stronger. And they reminded me that the old gal's clothes (that is Mrs. Cheetham: she is only twenty-six, and the prettiest lass in Coventry, and has a row of ivories that would do your heart good: now these



Hillsborough hags haven't got a set of front teeth among 'em, young or old.) Well, they told me the old gal's clothes could easily be spoiled, and her doll's face and all, with a penn'orth of vitriol."

"The monsters!"

"But it was all brag. These things are threatened fifty times, for once they are done."

"I shall not risk it. My own skin, if you like. But not hers: never, Mr. Cheetham: oh, never, never!"

"Well, but," said Mr. Cheetham, "she is in no danger so long as you keep away from her. They might fling one of their petards in at the window, if you were there; but otherwise, never, in this world. No, no, Little, they are not so bad as that. They have blown up a whole household, to get at the obnoxious party; but they always make sure he is there first."

Bayne was appealed to, and confirmed this; and, with great difficulty, they prevailed on Little to remain with them, until the unions should decide; and to discontinue his visits to the house on the hill in the meantime. I need hardly say they had no idea the house on the hill was "Woodbine Villa."

He left them, and, sick at heart, turned away from Heath Hill, and strolled out of the lower part of the town, and wandered almost at random, and sad as death.

He soon left the main road, and crossed the stile: it took him by the side of a babbling brook, and at the edge of a picturesque wood. Ever and anon he came to a water-wheel, and above the water-wheel a dam made originally by art, but now looking like a sweet little lake. They were beautiful places; the



wheels and their attendant works were old and rugged, but picturesque and countrified: and the little lakes behind, fringed by the master-grinder's garden, were strangely peaceful and pretty. Here the vulgar labour of the grindstone was made beautiful and incredibly poetic.

"Ah!" thought poor Little, "how happy a workman must be that plies his trade here in the fresh air. And how unfortunate I am to be tied to a power-wheel, in that filthy town, instead of being here, where Nature turns the wheel, and the birds chirp at hand, and the scene and the air are all purity and peace."

One place of the kind was particularly charming. The dam was larger than most, and sloping grass on one side, cropped short by the grinder's sheep; on the other his strip of garden: and bushes and flowers hung over the hedge and glassed themselves in the clear water. Below the wheel, and at one side, was the master-grinder's cottage, covered with creepers.

But Henry's mind was in no state to enjoy these beauties. He envied them; and, at last, they oppressed him, and he turned his back on them, and wandered, disconsolate, home.

He sat down on a stool by his mother, and laid his beating temples on her knees.

"What is it, my darling?" said she softly.

"Well, mother, for one thing, the unions are against me, and I see I shall have to leave Hillsborough, soon or late."

"Never mind, dear; happiness does not depend upon the place we live in: and oh, Henry, whatever you do, never quarrel with those terrible grinders and people. The world is wide. Let us go back to



London; the sooner the better. I have long seen there was something worrying you. But Saturday and Monday—they used to be your bright days.”

“It will come to that, I suppose,” said Henry, evading her last observation. “Yes,” said he, wearily, “it will come to that.” And he sighed so piteously that she forbore to press him. She had not the heart to cross-examine her suffering child.

That evening, mother and son sat silent by the fire: Henry had his own sad and bitter thoughts; and Mrs. Little was now brooding over the words Henry had spoken in the afternoon; and presently her maternal anxieties found a copious vent. She related to him, one after another, all the outrages that had been perpetrated in Hillsborough, while he was a child, and had been, each in its turn, the town talk.

It was a subject on which, if her son had been older, and more experienced in her sex, he would have closed her mouth promptly, she being a woman whose own nerves had received so frightful a shock, by the manner of her husband’s death. But, inadvertently, he let her run on, till she told him how a poor grinder had been carried home to his wife, blinded and scorched with gunpowder, and another had been taken home, all bleeding, to his mother, so beaten and bruised with life-preservers, that he had lain between life and death for nine days, and never uttered one word all that time, in reply to all her prayers and tears.

Now Mrs. Little began these horrible narratives with a forced and unnatural calmness; but, by the time she got to the last, she had worked herself up to a paroxysm of sympathy with other wretched women



in Hillsborough, and trembled all over, like one in an ague, for herself: and at last stretched out her shaking hands, and screamed to him, "Oh, Harry, Harry, have pity on your miserable mother! Think what these eyes of mine have seen—bleeding at my feet—there—there—I see it now"—(her eyes dilated terribly at the word)—"oh, promise me, for pity's sake, that these—same—eyes—shall never see *you* brought and laid down bleeding like *him!*" With this she went into violent hysterics, and frightened her son more than all the ruffians in the town had ever frightened him.

She was a long time in this pitiable condition, and he nursed her: but at last her convulsion ceased, and her head rested on her son's shou'der in a pitiable languor.

Henry was always a good son: but he never loved his mother so tenderly as he did this night. His heart yearned over this poor panting soul, so stately in form, yet so weak, so womanly, and loveable; his playmate in childhood, his sweet preceptor in boyhood; the best friend and most unselfish lover he had, or could ever hope to have, on earth; dear to him by her long life of loving sacrifice, and sacred by that their great calamity, which had fallen so much heavier on her than on him.

He soothed her, he fondled her, he kneeled at her feet, and promised her most faithfully he would never be brought home to her bruised or bleeding. No: if the unions rejected his offer he would go back to London with her at once.

And so, thrust from Hillsborough by the trades, and by his fears for Miss Carden, and also drawn from



it by his mother's terrors, he felt himself a feather on the stream of Destiny; and left off struggling: beaten, heart-sick, and benumbed, he let the current carry him like any other dead thing that drifts.

He still plied the hammer, but in a dead-alive way.

He wrote a few cold lines to Mr. Jobson, to say that he thought it was time for a plain answer to be given to a business proposal. But, as he had no great hope the reply would be favourable, he awaited it in a state bordering on apathy. And so passed a miserable week.

And all this time she, for whose sake he denied himself the joy and consolation of her company, though his heart ached and pined for it, had hard thoughts of him, and vented them too to Jael Dence.

The young are so hasty in all their judgments.

While matters were in this condition, Henry found, one morning, two fresh panes of glass broken in his window.

In these hardware works the windows seldom or never open: air is procured in all the rooms by the primitive method of breaking a pane here and a pane there; and the general effect is as unsightly as a human mouth where teeth and holes alternate. The incident therefore was nothing, if it had occurred in any other room; but it was not a thing to pass over in this room, secured by a Bramah lock, the key of which was in Henry's pocket: the panes must have been broken from the outside. It occurred to him directly that a stone had been thrown in with another threatening scrawl.



But, casting his eye all round, he saw nothing of the kind about.

Then, for a moment, a graver suspicion crossed his mind: might not some detonating substance, of a nature to explode when trodden upon, have been flung in? Hillsborough excelled in deviltries of this kind.

Henry thought of his mother, and would not treat the matter lightly or unsuspiciously. He stood still till he had lighted a lucifer match, and examined the floor of his room. Nothing.

He lighted a candle, and examined all the premises. Nothing.

But, when he brought his candle to the window, he made a discovery: the window had two vertical iron uprights, about three-quarters of an inch in circumference: and one of these revealed to his quick eye a bright horizontal line. It had been sawed with a fine saw.

Apparently an attempt had been made to enter his room from outside.

The next question was, had that attempt succeeded.

He tried the bar: it was not quite cut through.

He locked the forge up directly, and went to his handling-room. There he remained till Mr. Cheetham entered the works; then he went to him, and begged him to visit his forge.

Mr. Cheetham came directly, and examined the place carefully.

He negatived, at once, the notion that any Hillsborough hand had been unable to saw through a bar of that moderate thickness. "No," said he, "they were disturbed, or else some other idea struck them all of a



sudden; or else they hadn't given themselves time, and are coming again to-morrow. I hope they are. By six o'clock to-night, I'll have a common wooden shutter hung with six good hinges on each side, easy to open at the centre; only, across the centre, I'll fix a Waterloo cracker inside."

"A Waterloo cracker!"

"Ay, but such a one as you never saw. I shall make it myself. It shall be only four inches long, but as broad as my hand, and enough detonating powder in it to blow the shutter fifty feet into the air: and, if there should be one of Jobson's lads behind the shutter at the time, why, he'll learn flying, and nought to pay for wings."

"Why, sir, you are planning the man's death!"

"And what is *he* planning? Light your forge, and leave the job to me. I'm Hillsborough too: and they've put my blood up at last."

While Henry lighted his forge, Mr. Cheetham whipped out a rule, and measured the window exactly. This done, he went down the stairs, and crossed the yard to go to his office.

But, before he could enter it, a horrible thing occurred in the room he had just left; so horrible, it made him, brave as he was, turn and scream like a woman.

Some miscreant, by a simple but ingenious means, which afterwards transpired, had mixed a quantity of gunpowder with the smithy-slack or fine cinders of Henry's forge. The moment the forge was hot, the powder ignited with a tremendous thud, a huge mass of flame rushed out, driving the coals with it, like shot from a gun; Henry, scorched, blackened, and blinded,



was swept, as by a flaming wind, against the opposite wall: then, yelling, and stark mad with fright (for nothing drives men out of their wits like an explosion in a narrow space), he sprang at the window, head foremost, and with such velocity, that the sawed iron snapt like a stick of barley-sugar, and out he went head foremost; and this it was made Cheetham scream, to see him head downwards, and the paving-stones below.

But the aperture was narrow: his body flew through, but his right arm went round the unbroken upright, and caught it in the bend of the elbow.

Then Cheetham roared, "Hold on, Little! Hold on, I tell you!"

The scared brain of a man accustomed to obey received the command almost without the mind; and the grinders and forgers, running wildly into the yard, saw the obnoxious workman, black as a cinder from head to foot, bleeding at the face from broken glass, hanging up there by one hand, moaning with terror, and looking down with dilating eye, while thick white smoke rushed curling out, as if his body was burning. Death by suffocation was at his back, and broken bones awaited him below.

## CHAPTER VI.

AT sight of this human cinder, hanging by one hand between two deaths, every sentiment but humanity vanished from the ruggedest bosom, and the skilled workmen set themselves to save their unpopular comrade with admirable quickness and judgment: two new



wheel-bands, that had just come into the works, were caught up in a moment, and four workmen ran with them and got below the suspended figure: they then turned back to back, and, getting the bands over their shoulders, pulled hard against each other. This was necessary to straighten the bands: they weighed half a hundred-weight each. Others stood at the centre of the bands, and directed Little where to drop, and stood ready to catch him should he bound off them.

But now matters took an unexpected turn. Little, to all appearance, was blind and deaf. He hung there, moaning, and glaring, and his one sinewy arm supported his muscular but light frame almost incredibly. He was out of his senses, or nearly.

"Let thyself come, lad," cried a workman, "we are all right to catch thee."

He made no answer, but hung there glaring and moaning.

"The man will drop noane, till he swouns," said another, after watching him keenly.

"Then get you closer to the wall, men," cried Cheetham, in great anxiety. "He'll come like a stone, when he does come." This injunction was given none too soon: the men had hardly shifted their positions, when Little's hand opened, and he came down like lead, with his hands all abroad, and his body straight; but his knees were slightly bent, and he caught the bands just below the knee, and bounded off them into the air, like a cricket-ball. But many hands grabbed at him, and the grinder Reynolds caught him by the shoulder, and they rolled on the ground together, very little the worse for that tumble. "Well done! well done!" cried Cheetham. "Let him lie, lads, he is



best there for a while; and run for a doctor, one of you."

"Ay, run for Jack Doubleface," cried several voices at once.

"Now, make a circle, and give him air, men."

Then they all stood in a circle, and eyed the blackened and quivering figure with pity and sympathy, while the canopy of white smoke bellied over head. Nor were those humane sentiments silent; and the roughs seemed to be even more overcome than the others: no brains were required to pity this poor fellow now; and so strong an appeal to their hearts, through their senses, roused their good impulses and rare sensibilities. Oh, it was strange to hear good and kindly sentiments come out in the Dash dialect.

"It's a——shame!"

"There lies a good workman done for by some——thief, that wasn't fit to blow his bellows,——him!"

"Say he *was* a cockney, he was always——civil."

"And life's as sweet to him as to any man in Hillsborough."

"Hold your——tongue, he's coming to."

Henry did recover his wits enough to speak; and what do you think was his first word?

He clasped his hands together, and said,—"**MY MOTHER! OH, DON'T LET HER KNOW!**"

This simple cry went through many a rough heart; a loud gulp or two were heard soon after, and more than one hard and coaly cheek was channelled by sudden tears. But now a burly figure came rolling in; they drew back and silenced each other.—"**The Doctor!**" This was the remarkable person they called Jack Doubleface. Nature had stuck a philosophic head, with finely-



cut features, and a mouth brimful of finesse, on to a corpulent and ungraceful body, that yawed from side to side as he walked.

The man of art opened with two words. He looked up at the white cloud, which was now floating away; sniffed the air, and said, "Gunpowder!" Then he looked down at Little, and said, "Ah!" half drily, half sadly. Indeed several sentences of meaning condensed themselves into that simple interjection. At this moment, some men, whom curiosity had drawn to Henry's forge, came back to say the forge had been blown up, and "the bellows torn limb from jacket, and the room strewn with ashes."

The Doctor laid a podgy hand on the patient's wrist: the touch was light, though the fingers were thick and heavy. The pulse, which had been very low, was now galloping and bounding frightfully. "Fetch him a glass of brandy-and-water," said Dr. Amboyne. (There were still doctors in Hillsborough, though not in London, who would have had him bled on the spot.)

"Now, then, a surgeon! Which of you lads operates on the eye, in these works?"

A lanky file-cutter took a step forward. "I am the one that takes the motes out of their eyes."

"Then be good enough to show me his eye."

The file-cutter put out a hand with fingers prodigiously long and thin, and deftly parted both Little's eyelids with his finger and thumb, so as to show the whole eye.

"Hum!" said the Doctor, and shook his head.

He then patted the sufferer all over, and the result of that examination was satisfactory. Then came the



brandy-and-water; and while Henry's teeth were clattering at the glass and he was trying to sip the liquid, Dr. Amboyne suddenly lifted his head, and took a keen survey of the countenances round him. He saw the general expression of pity on the rugged faces. He also observed one rough fellow who wore a strange wild look; the man seemed puzzled, scared, confused, like one half awakened from some hideous dream. This was the grinder who had come into the works in place of the hand Cheetham had discharged for refusing to grind cockney blades.

"Hum!" said Dr. Amboyne, and appeared to be going into a brown study.

But he shook that off, and said briskly, "Now, then, what was his crime? Did he owe some mutual aid society six-and-fourpence?"

"That's right," said Reynolds, sullenly, "throw everything on the union. If we knew who it was, he'd lie by the side of this one in less than a minute, and, happen, not get up again so soon." A growl of assent confirmed the speaker's words. Cheetham interposed and drew Amboyne aside, and began to tell him who the man was and what the dispute; but Amboyne cut the latter explanation short. "What," said he, "is this the carver whose work I saw up at Mr. Carden's?"

"This is the very man, no doubt."

"Why, he's a sculptor: Praxiteles in wood. A fine choice they have made for their gunpowder, a workman that did honour to the town."

A faint flush of gratified pride coloured the ghastly cheek a moment.

"Doctor, shall I live to finish the bust?" said Henry, piteously.



"That and hundreds more, if you obey me. The fact is, Mr. Cheetham, this young man is not hurt, but his nerves have received a severe shock; and the sooner he is out of this place the better. Ah, there is my brougham at the gate. Come, put him into it, and I'll take him to the infirmary."

"No," said Little, "I won't go there; my mother would hear of it."

"Oh, then your mother is not to know?"

"Not for all the world! She has had trouble enough. I'll just wash my face and buy a clean shirt, and she'll never know what has happened. It would kill her. Oh, yes, it would kill her!"

The Doctor eyed him with warm approval. "You are a fine young fellow. I'll see you safe through this, and help you throw dust in your mother's eyes. If you go to her with that scratched face, we are lost. Come, get into my carriage, and home with me."

"Mayn't I wash my face first? And look at my shirt; as black as a cinder."

"Wash your face, by all means; but you can button your coat over your shirt."

The coat was soon brought, and so was a pail of water and a piece of yellow soap. Little dashed his head and face into the bucket, and soon inked all the water. The explosion had filled his hair with black dust, and grimed his face and neck like a sweep's. This ablution made him clean, but did not bring back his ruddy colour. He looked pale and scratched.

The men helped him officiously into the carriage, though he could have walked very well alone.

Henry asked leave to buy a clean shirt. The Doctor said he would lend him one at home.



While Henry was putting it on Doctor Amboyne ordered his dogcart instead of his brougham, and mixed some medicines. And soon Henry found himself seated in the dogcart, with a warm cloak over him, and whisking over the stones of Hillsborough.

All this had been done so rapidly and unhesitatingly that Henry, injured and shaken as he was, had yielded passive obedience. But now he began to demur a little. "But where are we going, sir?" he asked.

"To change the air and the scene. I'll be frank with you—you are man enough to bear the truth—you have received a shock that will very likely bring on brain fever, unless you get some sleep to-night. But you would not sleep in Hillsborough. You'd wake a dozen times in the night, trembling like an aspen leaf, and fancying you were blown up again."

"Yes, but my mother, sir! If I don't go home at seven o'clock, she'll find me out."

"If you went crazy, wouldn't she find you out? Come, my young friend, trust to my experience, and to the interest this attempt to murder you, and your narrow escape, have inspired in me. When I have landed you in the Temple of Health, and just wasted a little advice on a pig-headed patient in the neighbourhood (he is the Squire of the place), I'll drive back to Hillsborough, and tell your mother some story or other: you and I will concoct that together as we go."

At this Henry was all obedience, and indeed thanked him, with the tears in his eyes, for his kindness to a poor stranger.

Dr. Amboyne smiled. "If you were not a stranger, you would know that saving cutlers' lives is my hobby,



and one in which I am steadily resisted and defeated, especially by the cutlers themselves; why I look upon you as a most considerate and obliging young man for indulging me in this way. If you had been a Hillsborough hand, you would insist upon a brain-fever, and a trip to the lunatic asylum, just to vex me, and hinder me of my hobby."

Henry stared. This was too eccentric for him to take it all in at once. "What!" said Dr. Amboyne, observing his amazement. "Did you never hear of Dr. Doubleface?"

"No, sir."

"Never hear of the corpulent lunatic, who goes about the city, chanting, like a cuckoo, 'Put yourself in his place—put yourself in her place—in their place?'"

"No, sir, I never did."

"Then such is fame. Well, never mind that just now; there's a time for everything. Please observe that ruined house: the ancient family to whom it belongs are a remarkable example of the vicissitude of human affairs." He then told him the curious ups and downs of that family, which, at two distant periods, had held vast possessions in the county; but were now represented by the shell of one manor-house, and its dovecote, the size of a modern villa. Next he showed him an obscure battle-field, and told him that story, and who were the parties engaged; and so on. Every mile furnished its legend, and Dr. Amboyne related them all so graphically, that the patient's mind was literally stolen away from himself. At last, after a rapid drive of eleven miles through the pure invigorating air, they made a sudden turn, and entered a pleasant and singularly rural village: they drew up



at a rustic farm-house, clad with ivy; and Dr. Amboyne said, "This is the Temple: here you can sleep, as safe from gunpowder, as a field-marshal born."

The farmer's daughter came out, and beamed pleasure at sight of the Doctor: he got down, and told her the case, privately, and gave her precise instructions. She often interrupted the narrative with "Lawkadaisies," and other rural interjections, and simple exclamations of pity. She promised faithful compliance with his orders.

He then beckoned Henry in, and said, "This picture of health was a patient of mine once, as you are now; there's encouragement for you. I put you under her charge. Get a letter written to your mother, and I'll come back for it in half an hour. You had a headache, and were feverish, so you consulted a doctor. He advised immediate rest and change of air, and he drove you at once to this village. Write you that, and leave the rest to me. We doctors are dissembling dogs. We have still something to learn in curing diseases; but at making light of them to the dying, and other branches of amiable mendacity, we are masters."

As soon as he was gone, the comely young hostess began on her patient. "Dear heart, sir, was it really you as was blowed up with gunpowder?"

"Indeed it was, and not many hours ago. It seems like a dream."

"Well, now, who'd think that, to look at you? Why, you are none the worse, forbye a scratch or two, and, dear heart, I've seen a young chap bring as bad home, from courting, in these parts; and wed the lass as marked him—within the year."



"Oh, it is not the scratches; but feel my hand, how it trembles. And it used to be as firm as a rock; for I never drink."

"So it do, I declare. Why, you do tremble all over; and no wonder, poor soul! Come you in this minut, and sit down a bit by the fire, while I go and make the room ready for you."

But, as soon as he was seated by the fire, the current began to flow again. "Well, I never liked Hillsborough folk much—poor, mean-visaged tikes they be—but now I do hate 'em. What, blow up a decent young man like you, and a well-favoured, and hair like jet, and eyes in your head like sloes! But that's their ground of spite, I warrant me; the nasty, ugly, dirty dogs. Well, you may just snap your fingers at them all now. They don't come out so far as this; and, if they did, stouter men grows in this village than any in Hillsborough: and I've only to hold up my finger, for as little as I be, and they'd all be well ducked in father's horsepond, and then flogged home again with a good cart-whip well laid on. And, another thing, whatever we do, Squire he will make it good in law: he is gentle, and we are simple; but our folk and his has stood by each other this hundred year and more. But, la, I run on so, and you was to write a letter again the doctor came back. I'll fetch you some paper this minut."

She brought him writing materials, and stood by him, with this apology, "If 'twas to your sweetheart, I'd be off. But 'tis to your mother." (With a side glance,) "She have been a handsome woman in her day, I'll go bail."

"She is as beautiful as ever in my eyes," said Henry,



tenderly. "And, oh, heaven! give me the sense to write to her without frightening her."

"Then I won't hinder you no more with my chat," said his hostess, with kindly good humour, and slipped away upstairs. She lighted a great wood fire in the bedroom, and laid the bed and the blankets all round it, and opened the window, and took the home-spun linen sheets out of a press, and made the room very tidy. Then she went down again, and the moment Henry saw her, he said: "I feel your kindness, Miss, but I don't know your name, nor where in the world I am." His hostess smiled. "That is no secret. I'm Martha Dence—at your service: and this is Cairn-hope town."

"Cairn hope!" cried Henry, and started back, so that his wooden chair made a loud creak upon the stones of the farmer's kitchen.

Martha Dence stared, but said nothing; for almost at that moment the Doctor returned, all in a hurry, for the letter.

Henry begged him to look at it, and see if it would do.

The Doctor read it. "Hum!" said he, "it is a very pretty, filial letter, and increases my interest in you; give me your hand: there. Well, it won't do: too shaky. If your mother once sees this, I may talk till doomsday, she'll not believe a word. You must put off writing till to-morrow night. Now give me her address, for I really must get home."

"She lives on the second floor, No. 13, Chettle Street."

"Her name?"



"Sir, if you ask for the lady that lodges on the second floor, you will be sure to see her."

Doctor Amboyne looked a little surprised, and not very well pleased, at what seemed a want of confidence. But he was a man singularly cautious and candid in forming his judgments; so he forbore all comment, and delivered his final instructions. "Here is a bottle containing only a few drops of faba Ignatii in water. It's an innocent medicine, and has sometimes a magical effect in soothing the mind and nerves. A table-spoonful three times a day. And *this* is a sedative, which you can take if you find yourself quite unable to sleep. But I wouldn't have recourse to it unnecessarily; for these sedatives are uncertain in their operation; and, when a man is turned upside down, as you have been, they sometimes excite. Have a faint light in your bedroom. Tie a cord to the bell-rope, and hold it in your hand all night. Fix your mind on that cord, and keep thinking, 'This is to remind me that I am eleven miles from Hillsborough, in a peaceful village, safe from all harm.' To-morrow, walk up to the top of Cairnhope Peak, and inhale the glorious breeze, and look over four counties. Write to your mother at night, and, meantime, I'll do my best to relieve her anxiety. Good-by."

Memory sometimes acts like an old flint-gun: it hangs fire, yet ends by going off. While Dr. Amboyne was driving home, the swarthy, but handsome, features of the workman he had befriended seemed to enter his mind more deeply than during the hurry, and he said to himself, "Jet black hair; great black eyes; and



olive skin; they are rare in these parts; and, somehow, they remind me a little of *her*."

Then his mind went back, in a moment, over many years, to the days when he was stalwart, but not unwieldy, and loved a dark but peerless beauty, loved her deeply, and told his love, and was esteemed and pitied, but another was beloved.

And so sad, yet absorbing, was the retrospect of his love, his sorrow, and her own unhappy lot, that it blotted out of his mind, for a time, the very youth whose features and complexion had launched him into the past.

But the moment his horse's feet rang on the stones, this burly philosopher shook off the past, and set himself to recover lost time. He drove rapidly to several patients, and, at six o'clock, was at 13, Chettle Street, and asked for the lady on the second floor. "Yes, sir; she is at home," was the reply. "But I don't know; she lives very retired. She hasn't received any visits since they came. However, they rent the whole floor, and the sitting-room fronts you."

Dr. Amboyne mounted the stair and knocked at the door. A soft and mellow voice bade him enter. He went in, and a tall lady in black, with plain linen collar and wristbands, rose to receive him. They confronted each other. Time and trouble had left their trace, but there were the glorious eyes, and jet black hair, and the face, worn and pensive, but still beautiful. It was the woman he had loved, the only one.

"Mrs. Little!" said he, in an indescribable tone.

"Dr. Amboyne!"

For a few moments he forgot the task he had un-



dertaken; and could only express his astonishment and pleasure at seeing her once more.

Then he remembered why he was there; and the office he had undertaken so lightly alarmed him now.

His first instinct was to gain time. Accordingly, he began to chide her gently for having resided in the town and concealed it from him; then, seeing her confused and uncomfortable at that reproach, and in the mood to be relieved by any change of topic, he glided off, with no little address, as follows:—"Observe the consequences: here have I been most despotically rustivating a youth who turns out to be your son."

"My son! is there anything the matter with my son? Oh, Doctor Amboyne!"

"He must have been out of sorts, you know, or he would not have consulted me," replied the Doctor, affecting candour.

"Consult! Why, what has happened? He was quite well when he left me this morning."

"I doubt that. He complained of headache and fever. But I soon found his *mind* was worried. A misunderstanding with the trades! I was very much pleased with his face and manner; my carriage was at the door; his pulse was high, but there was nothing that country air and quiet will not restore. So I just drove him away, and landed him in a farmhouse."

Mrs. Little's brow flushed at this. She was angry. But, in a nature so gentle as hers, anger soon gave way. She turned a glance of tearful and eloquent reproach on Doctor Amboyne. "The first time we have ever been separated since he was born," said she, with a sigh.



Dr. Amboyne's preconceived plan broke down that moment. He said, hurriedly,—

"Take my carriage, and drive to him. Better do that than torment yourself."

"Where is he?" asked the widow, brightening up at the proposal.

"At Cairnhope."

At this word, Mrs. Little's face betrayed a series of emotions: first confusion, then astonishment, and at last a sort of superstitious alarm. "At Cairnhope?" she faltered at last. "My son at Cairnhope?"

"Pray do not torment yourself with fancies," said the Doctor. "All this is the merest accident—the simplest thing in the world. I cured Patty Dence of diphtheria, when it decimated the village. She and her family are grateful; the air of Cairnhope has a magic effect on people who live in smoke, and Martha and Jael let me send them out an invalid now and then to be reinvigorated. I took this young man there, not knowing who he was. Go to him, if you like. But, frankly, as his physician, I would rather you did not. Never do a wise thing by halves. He ought to be entirely separated from all his cares, even from yourself (who are doubtless one of them), for five or six days. He needs no other medicine but that, and the fine air of Cairnhope."

"Then somebody must see him every day, and tell me. Oh! Doctor Amboyne, this is the beginning: what will the end be? I am miserable."

"My man shall ride there every day, and see him, and bring you back a letter from him."

"Your man!" said Mrs. Little, a little haughtily.

Doctor Amboyne met her glance. "If there was



any ground for alarm, should I not go myself every day?" said he, gravely, and even tenderly.

"Forgive me," said the widow, and gave him her hand with a sweet and womanly gesture.

The main difficulty was now got over; and Doctor Amboyne was careful not to say too much, for he knew that his tongue moved among pitfalls.

As Dr. Amboyne descended the stairs, the landlady held a door ajar, and peeped at him, according to a custom of such delicate-minded females, as can neither restrain their curiosity nor indulge it openly. Dr. Amboyne beckoned to her, and asked for a private interview. This was promptly accorded.

"Would ten guineas be of any service to you, madam?"

"Eh, dear, that it would, sir. Why, my rent is just coming due."

Under these circumstances, the bargain was soon struck. Not a syllable about the explosion at Cheet-ham's was to reach the second-floor lodger's ears, and no Hillsborough journal was to mount the stairs until the young man's return. If inquired for, they were to be reported all sold out, and a London journal purchased instead.

Having secured a keen and watchful ally in this good woman, who, to do her justice, showed a hearty determination to earn her ten guineas, Dr. Amboyne returned home, his own philosophic pulse beating faster than it had done for some years.

He had left Mrs. Little grateful, and, apparently, in good spirits; but, ere he had been gone an hour, the bare separation from her son overpowered her, and



a host of vague misgivings tortured her, and she slept but little that night. By noon next day she was thoroughly miserable; but Dr. Amboyne's man rode up to the door in the afternoon with a cheerful line from Henry.

"All right, dear mother. Better already. Letter by post.

"HENRY."

She detained the man, and made up a packet of things for Cairnhope, and gave him five shillings to be sure and take them.

This was followed by a correspondence, a portion of which will suffice to eke out the narrative.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—I slept ill last night, and got up aching from head to foot, as if I had been well hided. But they sent me to the top of Cairnhope Peak, and, what with the keen air and the glorious view, I came home and ate like a hog. That pleased Martha Dence, and she kept putting me slices off her own plate, till I had to cry quarter. As soon as I have addressed this letter, I'm off to bed, for it is all I can do not to fall asleep sitting.

"I am safe to be all right to-morrow, so pray don't fret.

"I am,

"Dear mother,"

&c. &c.

"DEAREST MOTHER,—I hope you are not fretting about me. Dr. Amboyne promised to stop all that.



But do write, and say you are not fretting and fancying all manner of things at my cutting away so suddenly. It was the Doctor's doing. And, mother, I shall not stay long away from you, for I slept twelve hours at a stretch last night, and now I'm another man. But really, I think the air of that Cairnhope Peak would cure a fellow at his last gasp.

"Thank you for the linen, and the brushes and things. But you are not the sort to forget anything a fellow might want," &c.

"No, my darling son. Be in no hurry to leave Cairnhope. Of course, love, I was alarmed at first; for I know doctors make the best of everything; and then the first parting!—that is always a sorrowful thing. But, now you are there, I beg you will stay till you are quite recovered. Your letters are a delight, and one I could not have, and you as well, you know.

"Since you are at Cairnhope,—how strange that seems,—pray go and see the old church, where your forefathers are buried. There are curious inscriptions, and some brasses nobody could decipher when I was a girl; but perhaps you might, you are so clever. Your grandfather's monument is in the chancel: I want you to see it. Am I getting very old, that my heart turns back to these scenes of my youth?

"P. S.—Who is this Martha Dence?"

"DEAR MOTHER,—Martha Dence is the farmer's daughter I lodged with. She is not so pretty as her sister Jael that is with Miss Carden; but she is a comely girl, and as good as gold, and bespoke by the



butcher. And her putting slices from her plate to mine is a village custom I find.

“Mother, the people here are wonderfully good and simple. First of all, there’s farmer Dence, with his high bald head, like a patriarch of old; and he sits and beams with benevolence, but does not talk much. But he lets me see I can stay with him six years, if I choose. Then, there’s Martha, hospitality itself, and ready to fly at my enemies like a mastiff. She is a little hot in the temper; feathers up in a moment; but, at a soft word, they go down again as quick. Then, there’s the village blacksmith. I call him ‘The gentle giant.’ He is a tremendous fellow in height, and size, and sinew; but such a kind, sweet-tempered chap. He could knock down an ox, yet he wouldn’t harm a fly. I am his idol: I sauntered into his smithy, and forged him one or two knives; and of course he had never seen the hammer used with that nicety; but instead of hating me, as the bad forgers in Hillsborough do, he regularly worships me, and comes blushing up to the farmhouse after hours, to ask after me and get a word with me. He is the best whistler in the parish, and sometimes we march down the village at night, arm-in-arm, whistling a duet. This charms the natives so that we could take the whole village out at our heels, and put them down in another parish. But the droll thing is they will not take me for what I am. My gentle giant would say, ‘Sir’ till I pretended to be affronted; the women and girls would bob me curtseys, and the men and white-headed boys will take off their hats, and pull their front hair to me. If a skilled workman wants to burst with vanity, let him settle in Cairnhope.”



## [EXTRACT.]

"Martha Dence and I have had words, and what do you think it was about? I happened to let out my opinion of Mr. Raby. Mother, it was like setting a match to a barrel of gunpowder. She turned as red as fire, and said, 'Who be you that speaks against Raby to Dence?'

"I tried to pacify her, but it was no use. 'Don't speak to me,' said she. 'I thought better of you. You and I are out.' I bowed before the storm, and, to give her time to cool, I obeyed your wishes, and walked to Cairnhope old church. What a curious place! But I could not get in; and, on my return, I found Mr. Raby keeps the key. Now, you can't do a thing here, or say a word, but what it is known all over the village. So Martha Dence meets me at the door, and says, very stiffly, she thought I might have told her I wanted to see the old church. I pulled a long, penitent face, and said, 'Yes; but, unfortunately, I was out of her good books, and had orders not to speak to her.' 'Nay, says she, 'life is too short for long quarrels. You are a stranger, and knew no better.' Then she told me to wait five minutes while she put on her bonnut, as she calls it. Well, I waited five-and-forty minutes, and she put on her bonnut, and so many other smart things, that we couldn't possibly walk straight up to the old church. We had to go round by the butcher's shop, and order half a pound of suet; no less. 'And bring it yourself, this evening,' said I, 'or it might get lost on the road.' Says the butcher, 'Well, sir, that is the first piece of friendly advice any good Christian has bestowed——' But I



heard no more, owing to Martha chasing me out of the shop.

"To reach the old church we had to pass the old ruffian's door. Martha went in; I sauntered on, and she soon came after me, with the key in her hand. 'But,' said she, 'he told me if my name hadn't been Dence he wouldn't trust me with it, though I went on my bended knees.'

"We opened the church-door, and I spent an hour inside, examining and copying inscriptions for you. But, when I came to take up a loose brass, to try and decipher it, Martha came screaming to me, 'Oh, put it down! put it down! I pledged my word to Squire you should not touch them brasses.' What could I do, mother? The poor girl was in an agony. This old ruffian has, somehow, bewitched her, and her father too, in a sort of superstitious devotion that I can't help respecting, unreasonable as it is. So I dropped the brass, and took to reflecting. And I give you my thoughts.

"What a pity and a shame that a building of this size should lie idle! If it was mine I would carefully remove all the monuments, and the dead bones, etcetera, to the new church, and turn this old building into a factory, or a set of granaries, or something useful. It is as great a sin to waste bricks and mortar as it is bread," &c.

"MY DEAR HARRY,—Your dear sprightly letters delight me, and reconcile me to the separation; for I see that your health is improving every day, by your gaiety; and this makes me happy, though I cannot quite be gay.



“Your last letter was very amusing, yet, somehow, it set me thinking, long and sadly; and some gentle remarks from Dr. Amboyne (he called yesterday) have also turned my mind the same way. Time has softened the terrible blow that estranged my brother and myself, and I begin to ask myself, was my own conduct perfect? was my brother’s quite without excuse? I may have seen but one side, and been too hasty in judging him. At all events, I would have you, who are a man, think for yourself, and not rush into too harsh a view of that unhappy quarrel. Dearest, family quarrels are family misfortunes: why should they go down to another generation? You frighten me, when you wonder that Nathan and his family (I had forgotten his name was Dence) are attached to Mr. Raby. Why, with all his faults, my brother is a chivalrous, high-minded gentleman; his word is his bond, and he never deserts a friend, however humble; and I have heard our dear father say that, for many generations, uncommon acts of kindness had passed between that family of yeomen and the knights and squires of Raby.

“And now, dear, I am going to be very foolish. But, if these Dences are as great favourites with him as they were with my father, she could easily get you into the house some day, when he is out hunting; and I do want you to see one thing more before you come back from Cairnhope—your mother’s picture. It hangs, or used to hang, in the great dining-room, nearly opposite the fireplace.

“I blush at my childishness, but I *should* like my child to see what his mother was, when she brought him into the world, that sad world in which he has been her only joy and consolation.



"P. S.—What an idea! Turn that dear old church into a factory! But you are a young man of the day. And a wonderful day it is; I cannot quite keep up with it."

"DEAR MOTHER,—I have been there. Mr. Raby is a borough magistrate, as well as a county justice; and was in Hillsborough all day to-day. Martha Dence took me to Raby Hall, and her name was a passport. When I got to the door, I felt as if something pulled me, and said, 'It's an enemy's house; don't go in.' I wish I had obeyed the warning; but I did not.

"Well, I have seen your portrait. It is lovely. It surpasses any woman I ever saw. And it must have been your image, for it is very like you now, only in the bloom of your youth.

"And now, dear mother, having done something for you, quite against my own judgment, and my feelings too, please do something for me. Promise me never to mention Mr. Raby's name to me again, by letter, or by word of mouth either. He is not a gentleman; he is not a man; he is a mean, spiteful, cowardly cur. I'll keep out of his way, if I can; but if he gets in mine, I shall give him a devilish good hiding, then and there, and I'll tell *him* the reason why; and I will not tell *you*.

"Dear mother, I did intend to stay till Saturday, but, after this, I shall come back to you to-morrow. My own sweet dove of a mammy; who but a beast could hurt or affront you?

"So no more letters from your

"Dutiful and affectionate son,

"HARRY."



Next day young Little took leave of his friends in Cairnhope, with a promise to come over some Sunday, and see them all. He borrowed a hooked stick of his devotee, the blacksmith, and walked off with his little bundle over his shoulder, in high health and spirits, and ripe for anything.

Some successful men are so stout-hearted, their minds seem never to flinch. Others are elastic; they give way, and appear crushed; but, let the immediate pressure be removed, they fly back again, and their enemy finds he has not gained an inch. Henry's was of this sort; and, as he swung along through the clear brisk air, the world seemed his football once more.

This same morning Jael Dence was to go to Cairnhope, at her own request.

She packed her box, and corded it, and brought it down herself, and put it in the passage, and the carrier was to call for it at one. As for herself, four miles of omnibus, and the other seven on foot, was child's play to her, whose body was as lusty and active as her heart was tender and clinging.

She came in to the drawing-room, with her bonnet and shawl on, and the tear in her eye, to bid Miss Carden good-by. Two male friends would have parted in five minutes; but this pair were a wonderful time separating, and still there was always something to say, that kept Grace detaining, or Jael lingering; and, when she had been going, going, going, for more than half-an-hour, all of a sudden she cried out, "Oh! There he is!" and flushed all over.

"Who?" asked Grace, eagerly.

"The dark young man. He is at the door now, Miss.—And me going away," she faltered.



"Well then, why go till he has paid his visit? Sit down. You needn't take off your bonnet."

Miss Carden then settled herself, took up her work, and prepared to receive her preceptor as he deserved, an intention she conveyed to Jael by a glance, just as Henry entered, blooming with exercise and the keen air, and looking extremely handsome and happy.

His reception was a chilling bow from Miss Carden, and from Jael a cheek blushing with pleasure at the bare sight of him, but an earnest look of mild reproach. It seemed cruel of him to stay away so long, and then come just as she was going.

This reception surprised Henry, and disappointed him; however he constrained himself, and said politely, but rather coldly, that some unpleasant circumstances had kept him away; but he hoped now to keep his time better.

"Oh, pray consult your own convenience entirely," said Miss Carden. "Come, when you have nothing better to do; that is the understanding."

"I should be always coming at that rate."

Grace took no notice. "Would you like to see how I look with my one eyebrow?" said she. "Jael, please fetch it."

While Jael was gone for the bust, Henry took a humbler tone, and in a low voice began to excuse his absence; and I think he would have told the real truth, if he had been encouraged a little; but he was met with a cold and withering assurance that it was a matter of no consequence. Henry thought this unfair, and, knowing in his own heart it was ungrateful, he rebelled. He bit his lip, sat down as gloomy as the grave, and resumed his work, silent and sullen.



As for Jael, she brought in the bust, and then sat down with her bonnet on, quaking; for she felt sure that, in such a dismal dearth of conversation, Miss Carden would be certain to turn round very soon, and say, "Well, Jael, you can go now."

But this Quaker's meeting was interrupted by a doctor looking in to prescribe for Miss Carden's cold. The said cold was imperceptible to vulgar eyes, but Grace had detected it, and had written to her friend, Dr. Amboyne, to come and make it as imperceptible to herself as to the spectator.

In rolled the Doctor, and was not a little startled at sight of Little.

"Hallo!" cried he. "What, cured already? Cairn-hope for ever!" He then proceeded to feel his pulse instead of Miss Carden's, and inspect his eye, at which Grace Carden stared.

"What, is he unwell?"

"Why, a man does not get blown up with gunpowder without some little disturbance of the system."

"Blown up with gunpowder! What *do* you mean?"

"What, have you not heard about it? Don't you read the newspapers?"

"No; never."

"Merciful powers! But has he not told you?"

"No; he tells us nothing."

"Then I'll tell you. It is of no use your making faces at me. There is no earthly reason why *she* should be kept in the dark. These Hillsborough trades want to drive this young man out of the town: why—is too long and intricate for you to follow. He resists this tyranny, gently, but firmly."

"I'd resist it furiously," said Grace.



"The consequence is, they wrote him several threatening letters; and, at last, some caitiff put gunpowder into his forge; it exploded, and blew him out of a second-floor window."

"Oh! oh!" screamed Grace Carden and Jael; and by one womanly impulse they both put their hands before their faces, as if to shut out the horrible picture.

"What is that for?" said the Doctor. "You see he is all right now. But, I promise you, he cut a very different figure when I saw him directly afterwards; he was scorched as black as a coal ——"

"Oh, Doctor, don't; pray don't. Oh, sir, why did you not tell me?"

"And his face bleeding," continued the merciless Doctor.

"Oh dear! oh dear!" And the sweet eyes were turned, all swimming in water, upon Henry, with a look of angelic pity.

"His nerves were terribly shaken, but there were no bones broken. I said to myself, 'He must sleep or go mad, and he will not sleep in the town that has blown him up.' I just drove the patient off to peace and pure air, and confided him to one of the best creatures in England—Martha Dence."

Jael uttered an exclamation of wonder, which drew attention to her and her glowing cheeks.

"Oh yes, Miss Jael," said Henry, "I was going to tell you. I have been a fortnight with your people, and, if I live a hundred years, I shall never forget their goodness to me. God bless them."

"'Twas the least they could do," said Jael, softly.

"What a pity you are going out. I should have liked to talk to you about your father, and Martha,



and George the blacksmith. Doctor, who would live in a town after Cairnhope?"

Jael's fingers trembled at her bonnet-strings, and, turning a look of piteous supplication on Grace, she faltered out, "If you please, Miss, might I stay over to-day?"

"Of course. And then he will tell you all about your people, and that will do just as well as you going to see them; and better."

Off came Jael's bonnet with wonderful celerity.

"Get the whole story out of him," said Dr. Amboyne. "It is well worth your attention. As for me, I must go as soon as I have prescribed for you. What is the matter?"

"The matter is that there's nothing the matter; prescribe for that. And that I'm a goose—prescribe for that—and don't read the newspapers; prescribe for that."

"Well, then, I prescribe the *Hillsborough Liberal*. It has drawn a strong picture of this outrage, and shown its teeth to the trades. And, if I might advise a lady of your age and experience, I would say, in future always read the newspapers. They are, compared with books, what machinery is compared with hand-labour. But, in this one instance, go to the fountain-head, and ask Mr. Henry Little there, to tell you his own tragedy, with all the ins and outs."

"Ah! if he would," said Grace, turning her eyes on Henry. "But he is not so communicative to poor us. Is he, Jael?"

"No, Miss."

"He never even told us his name. Did he, Jael?"

"No, Miss. He is very close."



"Open him then," said the Doctor. "Come, come, there are a pair of you; and evidently disposed to act in concert; if you cannot turn a man inside out, I disown you; you are a discredit to your sex." He then shook hands with all three of them, and rolled away.

"Jael," said Miss Carden, "oblige me by ringing the bell."

A servant entered.

"Not at home to any human creature," said the young lady.

The servant retired.

"And, if they see me at the window, all the worse—for *them*. Now, Mr. Little?"

Henry complied, and told the whole story, with the exception of the threat to his sweetheart; and passed two delightful hours. Who is so devoid of egotism as not to like to tell his own adventures, to sympathising beauty? He told it in detail, and even read them portions of the threatening letters; and, as he told it, their lovely eyes seemed on fire; and they were red, and pale, by turns. He told it, like a man, with dignity, and sobriety, and never used an epithet. It was Miss Carden who supplied the "Monsters!" "Villains!" "Cowards!" "Wretches!" at due intervals. And once she started from her seat, and said she could not bear it. "I see through it all," she cried. "That Jobson is a hypocrite; and he is at the bottom of it all. I hate him; and Parkin worse. As for the assassin, I hope God, who saw him, will punish him. What I want to do is to kill Jobson and Parkin, one after another; kill them—kill them—kill them—I'll tell papa."

As for Jael, she could not speak her mind, but she



panted heavily, and her fingers worked convulsively, and clutched themselves very tight at last.

When he had done his narrative, he said sadly, "I despise these fellows as much as you do; but they are too many for me. I am obliged to leave Hillsborough."

"What, let the wretches drive you away? I would never do that—if I was a man."

"What would you do then?" asked Henry, his eye sparkling.

"Do? Why fight them; and beat them; and kill them. It is not as if they were brave men. They are only cunning cowards. I'd meet cunning with cunning. I'd out-wit them somehow. I'd change my lodging every week, and live at little inns and places. I'd lock up everything I used, as well as the rooms. I'd consult wiser heads, the Editor of the *Liberal*, and the Head of the police. I'd carry fire-arms, and have a body-guard, night and day; but they should never say they had frightened me out of Hillsborough—if I was a man."

"You are right," cried Henry. "I'll do all you advise me, and I won't be driven out of this place. I love it. I'll live in it, or I'll die in it. I'll never leave it."

This was almost the last word that passed this delightful afternoon, when the sense of her own past injustice, the thrilling nature of the story told by the very sufferer, and, above all, the presence and the undisguised emotion of another sympathising woman, thawed Grace Carden's reserve, warmed her courage, and carried her, quite unconsciously, over certain con-



ventional bounds, which had, hitherto, been strictly observed in her intercourse with this young workman.

Henry himself felt that this day was an era in his love. When he left the door, he seemed to tread on air. He walked to the first cab-stand, took a conveyance to his mother's door, and soon he was locked in her arms.

She had been fretting for hours at his delay; but she never let him know it. The whole place was full of preparations for his comfort, and certain delicacies he liked were laid out on a little sideboard, and the tea-things set, including the silver teapot, used now on high occasions only.

She had a thousand questions to ask, and he to answer. And, while he ate, the poor woman leaned back, and enjoyed seeing him eat; and, while he talked, her fine eyes beamed with maternal joy. She revelled deliciously in his health, his beauty, and his safe return to her; and thought, with gentle complacency, that they should soon return to London together.

In the morning, she got out a large light box, and said, "Harry dear, I suppose I may as well begin to pack up. You know I take longer than you do."

Henry blushed. "Pack up?" said he, hesitatingly. "We are not going away."

"Not going away, love? Why you agreed to leave, on account of those dreadful unions."

"Oh, I was ill, and nervous, and out of spirits; but the air of Cairnhope has made a man of me. I shall stay here, and make our fortune."

"But the air of Cairnhope has not made you friends with the unions," She seemed to reflect a



moment, then asked him at what time he had left Cairnhope.

"Eleven o'clock."

"Ah! And who did you visit before you came to me?"

"You question me like a child, mother."

"Forgive me, dear. I will answer my own question. You called on some one who gave you bad advice."

"Oh, did I?"

"On some woman."

"Say a lady."

"What does that matter to me?" cried Mrs. Little, wildly. "They are all my enemies. And this one is yours. It is a woman, who is not your mother, for she thinks more of herself than of you."

## CHAPTER VII.

HENRY had now to choose between his mother's advice and Miss Carden's commands; and this made him rather sullen and irritable. He was glad to get out of his mother's house, and went direct to the works. Bayne welcomed him warmly, and, after some friendly congratulations and inquiries, pulled out two files of journals, and told him he had promised to introduce him to the Editor of the *Liberal*. He then begged Henry to wait in the office, and read the files—he would not be gone many minutes.

The *Constitutional* gave a dry narrative of the outrage, and mourned the frequency of such incidents.

The *Liberal* gave a dramatic narrative, and said



the miscreant must have lowered himself by a rope from the parapet, and passed the powder inside without entering. "He perilled his life to perpetrate this crime; and he also risked penal servitude for ten years. That he was not deterred by the double risk, proves the influence of some powerful motive; and that motive must have been either a personal feud of a very virulent kind, or else trade fanaticism. From this alternative there is no escape."

Next day, both journals recorded a trade-meeting at "The Rising Sun." Delegates from the Edge-Tool Forgers' Union, and the Edge-Tool Handlers' Union, with some other representatives of Hillsborough unions, were present, and passed a resolution repudiating, with disgust, the outrage that had been recently committed, and directed their secretaries to offer a reward of twenty pounds, the same to be paid to any person who would give such information as should lead to the discovery of the culprit.

On this the *Constitutional* commented as follows:—"Although we never for a moment suspected these respectable unions of conniving at this enormity, yet it is satisfactory to find them, not merely passive spectators, but exerting their energy, and spending their money, in a praiseworthy endeavour to discover and punish the offenders."

Henry laid down the paper, and his heart felt very warm to Jobson and Parkin. "Come," said he, "I am glad of that. They are not half a bad sort, those two, after all."

Then he took up the *Liberal*, and, being young and generous, felt disgusted at its comment:—



"This appears very creditable to the two unions in question. But, unfortunately, long experience proves that these small rewards never lead to any discovery. They fail so invariably, that the unions do not risk a shilling by proffering them. In dramatic entertainments the tragedy is followed by a farce: and so it is with these sanguinary crimes in Hillsborough; they are always followed by repudiation, and offers of a trumpery reward quite disproportionate to the offence, and the only result of the farce is to divert attention from the true line of inquiry as to who enacted the tragedy. The mind craves novelty, and perhaps these delegates will indulge that desire by informing us for once, what was the personal and Corsican feud which led—as they would have us believe—to this outrage; and will, at the same time explain to us why these outrages with gunpowder have never, either in this or in any preceding case, attacked any but non-union men."

When Henry had read thus far, the writer of the leader entered the room with Mr. Bayne.

A gentleman not above the middle height, but with a remarkable chest, both broad and deep; yet he was not unwieldy, like Doctor Amboyne, but clean-built, and symmetrical. An agreeable face, with one remarkable feature, a mouth full of iron resolution, and a slight humorous dimple at the corners.

He shook hands with Henry, and said, "I wish to ask you a question or two, in the way of business: but first let me express my sympathy, as a man, and my detestation of the ruffians, that have so nearly victimized you."

This was very hearty, and Henry thanked him, with some emotion. "But, sir," said he, "if I am to reply



to your questions, you must promise me you will never publish my name."

"It is on account of his mother," whispered Bayne.

"Yes, sir. It was her misfortune to lose my father by a violent death, and of course you may imagine——"

"Say no more," said Mr. Holdfast: "your name shall not appear. And—let me see—does your mother know you work here?"

"Yes, she does."

"Then we had better keep Cheetham's name out as well."

"Oh, thank you, sir, thank you. Now I'll answer any questions you like."

"Well, then, I hear this outrage was preceded by several letters. Could I see them?"

"Certainly. I carry mine always in my pocket, for fear my poor mother should see them; and, Mr. Bayne, you have got Cheetham's."

In another minute the whole correspondence was on the table, and Mr. Holdfast laid it out in order, like a map, and went through it, taking notes. "What a comedy," said he. "All but the denouement. Now, Mr. Bayne, can any other manufacturers show me a correspondence of this kind?"

"Is there one that can't? There isn't a power-wheel, or a water-wheel, within eight miles of Hillsborough, that can't show you just such a correspondence as this; and rattening, or worse, at the tail of it."

Mr. Holdfast's eyes sparkled like a diamond. "I'll make the round," said he. "And, Mr. Little, perhaps you will be kind enough to go with me, and let me



question you, on the road. I have no sub-editor; no staff; I carry the whole journal on my head. Every day is a hard race between Time and me, and not a minute to spare."

Mr. Cheetham was expected at the works this afternoon: so Henry, on leaving Mr. Holdfast, returned to them, and found him there with Bayne looking, disconsolately, over a dozen orders for carving-tools.

"Glad to see you again, my lad," said Cheetham. "Why, you look all the better."

"I'm none the worse, sir."

"Come to take your balance and leave me?" This was said half plaintively, half crossly.

"If you wish it, sir."

"Not I. How is it to be?"

"Well, sir, I say to you what you said to me the other day, Stick to me, and I'll stick to you."

"I'll stick to you."

Bayne held up his hands piteously to them both.

"What, sir?" faltered he, turning to Cheetham, "after all your experience!" then to Henry, "What, fight the trades, after the lesson they have given you!"

"I'll fight them all the more for that," said Henry, grinding his teeth; "fight them till all is blue."

"So will I. That for the trades!"

"Heaven help you both!" groaned Bayne, and looked the picture of despair.

"You promised me shutters, with a detonator, sir."

"Ay, but you objected."

"That was before they blew me up."



"Just so. Shutters shall be hung to-morrow: and the detonators I'll fix myself."

"Thank you, sir. Would you mind engaging a watchman?"

"Hum? Not—if you will share the expense."

"I'll pay one-third."

"Why should I pay two-thirds? It is not like shutters and Bramah locks: they are property. However, he'll be good against rattening; and you have lost a fortnight, and there are a good many orders. Give me a good day's work, and we won't quarrel over the watchman." He then inquired, rather nervously, whether there was anything more.

"No, sir; we are agreed. And I'll give you good work, and full time."

The die was cast, and now he must go home and face his mother. For the first time this many years he was half afraid to go near her. He dreaded remonstrances and tears: tears that he could not dry; remonstrances that would worry him, but could not shake him.

This young man, who had just screwed his physical courage up to defy the redoubtable unions, had a fit of moral cowardice, and was so reluctant to encounter the gentlest woman in England, that he dined in a chop-house, and then sauntered into a music-hall, and did not get home till past ten, meaning to say a few kind, hurried words, then yawn, and slip to bed.

But, meantime, Mrs. Little's mind had not been idle. She had long divined a young rival in her son's heart, and many a little pang of jealousy had traversed her own. This morning, with a quickness which may



seem remarkable to those who have not observed the watchful keenness of maternal love, she had seen that her rival had worked upon Henry to resign his declared intention of leaving Hillsborough. Then she had felt her way, and, in a moment, she had found the younger woman was the stronger.

She assumed, as a matter of course, that this girl was in love with Henry (who would not be in love with him?), and had hung, weeping, round his neck, when he called from Cairnhope to bid her farewell, and had made him promise to stay. This was the mother's theory; wrong, but rational.

Then came the question, What should she do? Fight against youth and nature? Fight, unlikely to succeed, sure to irritate and disturb. Risk any of that rare affection and confidence her son had always given her?

While her thoughts ran this way, seven o'clock came, and no Henry. Eight o'clock, no Henry. "Ah!" thought the mother, "that one word of mine has had this effect already."

She prepared an exquisite little supper. She made her own toilet with particular care; and, when all was ready, she sat down and comforted herself by reading his letters, and comparing his love with the cavalier behaviour of many sons in this island—the most unfilial country in Europe.

At half-past ten Henry came up the stairs, not with the usual light elastic tread, but with slow, hesitating foot. Her quick ear caught that too, and her gentle bosom yearned. What, had she frightened him? He opened the door, and she rose to receive him, all smiles. "You are rather late, dear," she said; "but



all the better. It has given me an excuse for reading your dear letters all over again; and I have a thousand questions to ask you about Cairnhope. But sit down first, and have your supper."

Henry brightened up, and ate a good supper, and his mother plied him with questions, all about Cairnhope.

Here was an unexpected relief. Henry took a superficial view of all this. Sharp young men of twenty-four understand a great many things; but they can't quite measure their mothers yet.

Henry was selfishly pleased, but not ungrateful, and they passed a pleasant and affectionate time: and, as for leaving Hillsborough, the topic was avoided by tacit consent.

Next morning, after this easy victory, Henry took a cab and got to "Woodbine Villa," by a circuitous route. His heart beat high as he entered the room where Grace was seated. After the extraordinary warmth and familiarity she had shown him at the last interview, he took for granted he had made a lasting progress in her regard.

But she received him with a cold and distant manner, that quite benumbed him. Grace Carden's face and manner were so much more expressive than other people's, that you could never mistake or doubt the mood she was in; and this morning she was freezing.

The fact is, Miss Carden had been tormenting herself; and, when beauty suffers, it is very apt to make others suffer as well.

"I am glad you are come, Mr. Little," said she, "for I have been taking myself to task ever since, and



I blame myself very much for some things I said. In the first place, it was not for me" (here the fair speaker coloured up to the temples) "to interfere in your affairs at all; and then, if I must take such a liberty, I ought to have advised you sensibly, and for your good. I have been asking people, and they all tell me it is madness for one person to fight against these unions. Everybody gets crushed. So now let me hope you will carry out your wise intention, and leave Hillsborough; and then my conscience will be at ease."

Every word fell like an icicle on her hearer's heart. To please this cold, changeful creature, he had settled to defy the unchangeable unions, and had been ready to resist his mother, and slight her immortal and unchanging love.

"You don't answer me, sir!" said Miss Carden, with an air of lofty surprise.

"I answered you yesterday," said he, sullenly. "A man can't chop and change like a weathercock."

"But it is not changing, it's only going back to your own intention. You know you were going to leave Hillsborough, before I talked all that nonsense. Your story had set me on fire, and that's my only excuse. Well, now the same person takes the liberty to give you wise and considerate advice, instead of hot, and hasty, romantic nonsense. Which ought you to respect most—folly or reason—from the same lips?"

Henry seemed to reflect. "That sounds reasonable," said he; "but, when you advised me not to show the white feather, you spoke your heart; now, you are only talking from your head. Then your beautiful eyes flashed fire, and your soul was in your



words: who could resist them? And you spoke to me like a friend; now you speak to me like an enemy."

"Oh, Mr. Little, that is ridiculous."

"You do, though. And I'm sure I don't know why."

"Nor I. Perhaps because I am cross with myself; certainly not with you."

"I am glad of that. Well, then, the long and the short is, you showed me you thought it cowardly to fly from the trades. You wouldn't, said you, if you were a man. Well, I am a man; and I'll do as you would do in my place. I'll not throw my life away; I'll meet craft with craft, and force with force; but fly I never will. I'll fight while I've a leg to stand on."

With these words he began to work on the bust, in a quiet dogged way that was, nevertheless, sufficiently expressive.

Grace looked at him silently for half a minute, and then rose from her chair.

"Then," said she, "I must go for somebody of more authority than I am." She sailed out of the room.

Henry asked Jael who she was gone for.

"It will be her papa," said Jael.

"As if I care what he says."

"I wouldn't show *her* that, if I was you," said Jael, quietly, but with a good deal of weight.

"You are right," said Henry. "You are a good girl. I don't know which is the best, you or Martha. I say, I promised to go to Cairnhope some Sunday, and see them all. Shall I drive you over?"

"And bring me back at night?"

"If you like. *I* must come back."



"I'll ask Miss Carden."

The words were quiet and composed, but the blushing face beamed with unreasonable happiness; and Grace, who entered at that moment with her father, was quite struck with its eloquence; she half started, but took no further notice just then. "There, papa," said she, "this is Mr. Little."

Mr. Carden was a tall gentleman, with somewhat iron features, but a fine head of grey hair; rather an imposing personage; not the least pompous, though; quite a man of the world, and took a business view of everything—matrimony, of course, included.

"Oh, this is Mr. Little, is it, whose work we all admire so much?"

"Yes, papa."

"And whose adventure has made so much noise?"

"Yes, papa."

"By-the-by, there is an article to-day on you: have you seen it? No? But you should see it; it is very smart. My dear" (to Jael), "will you go to my study, and bring the *Liberal* here?"

"Yes, but meantime, I want you to advise him not to subject himself to more gunpowder and things, but to leave the town; that is all the wretches demand."

"And that," said Henry, with a sly deferential tone, "is a good deal to demand in a free country, is it not, sir?"

"Indeed it is. Ah, here comes the *Liberal*. Somebody read the article to us, while he works. I want to see how he does it."

Curiosity overpowered Grace's impatience for a



moment, and she read the notice out with undisguised interest.

“‘THE LAST OUTRAGE.

“‘In our first remarks upon this matter, we merely laid down an alternative which admits of no dispute; and, abstaining from idle conjectures, undertook to collect evidence. We have now had an interview with the victim of that abominable outrage. Mr. \* is one of those superior workmen who embellish that class for a few years, but invariably rise above it, and leave it’—(there, Mr. Little!)—‘He has informed us that he is a stranger in Hillsborough, lives retired, never sits down in a public-house, and has not a single enemy in Hillsborough, great or small. He says that his life was saved by his fellow-workmen, and that as he lay scorched——’ (oh dear!)”

“Well, go on, Grace.”

“It is all very well to say go on, papa——‘scorched and bleeding on the ground, and unable to distinguish faces’ (poor, poor Mr. Little!) ‘he heard, on all sides of him, expressions of rugged sympathy; and sobs, and tears, from rough, but—manly fellows, who——’ (oh! oh! oh!)”

Grace could not go on for whimpering, and Jael cried, for company. Henry left off carving, and turned away his head, touched to the heart by this sweet and sudden sympathy.

“How badly you read,” said Mr. Carden, and took the journal from her. He read in a loud business-like monotone, that, like some blessed balm, dried every tear. “‘Manly fellows who never shed a tear before: this disposed of one alternative, and narrowed the in-



quiry. It was not a personal feud; therefore it was a trade outrage, or it was nothing. We now took evidence bearing on the inquiry thus narrowed; and we found the assault had been preceded by a great many letters, all of them breathing the spirit of Unionism, and none of them intimating a private wrong. These letters, taken in connection, are a literary curiosity; and we find there is scarcely a manufacturer in the place who has not endured a similar correspondence, and violence at the end of it. This curious chapter of the human mind really deserves a separate heading, and we introduce it to our readers as

“THE LITERATURE OF OUTRAGE.

“First of all comes a letter to the master, intimating that he is doing something objectionable to some one of the many unions that go to make a single implement of hardware. This letter has three features. It is signed with a real name. It is polite. It is grammatical.

“If disregarded, it is speedily followed by another. No. 2 is grammatical, or thereabouts; but, under a feigned politeness, the insolence of a vulgar mind shows itself pretty plainly, and the master is reminded what he suffered on some former occasion when he rebelled against the trades. This letter is sometimes anonymous, generally pseudonymous.

“If this reminder of the past and intimation of the future is disregarded, the refractory master gets a missive which begins with an affectation of coarse familiarity, and then rises, with a ludicrous bound, into brutal and contemptuous insolence. In this letter grammar is flung to the winds, along with good man-



ners; but spelling survives, by a miracle. Next comes a short letter, full of sanguinary threats, and written in, what we beg leave to christen, the Dash dialect; because, though used by at least three million people in England, and three thousand in Hillsborough, it can only be printed with blanks, the reason being simply this, that every sentence is measled with oaths and indecencies. These letters are also written phonetically, and, as the pronunciation, which directs the spelling, is all wrong, the double result is prodigious. Nevertheless, many of these pronunciations are ancient, and were once universal. An antiquarian friend assures us the orthography of these blackguards—the scum of the nineteenth century—is wonderfully like that of a mediæval monk or baron.

“‘When the correspondence has once descended to the Dash dialect, written phonetically, it never remounts towards grammar, spelling, or civilization; and the next step in the business is rattening, or else beating, or shooting, or blowing-up the obnoxious individual by himself, or along with a houseful of people quite strange to the quarrel. Now, it is manifest to common sense, that all this is one piece of mosaic, and that the criminal act it all ends in is no more to be disconnected from the last letter, than the last letter from its predecessor, or letter 3 from letter 2. Here is a crime first gently foreshadowed, then grimly intimated, then directly threatened, then threatened in words that smell of blood and gunpowder, and then—done. The correspondence and the act reveal

‘The various talents, but the single mind.

“‘In face of this evidence, furnished by themselves,



the trades' unions, some member of which has committed this crime, will do well to drop the worn-out farce of offering a trumpery reward, and to take a direct and manly course. They ought to accept Mr. \*'s preposterously liberal offer, and admit him to the two unions, and thereby disown the criminal act in the form most consolatory to the sufferer; or else they should face the situation, and say, "This act was done under our banner, though not by our order, and we stand by it." The *Liberal* will continue to watch the case.' "

"This will be a pill," said Mr. Carden, laying down the paper. "Why, they call the *Liberal* the workman's advocate."

"Yes, papa," said Grace; "but how plainly he shows—— But Mr. Little is a stranger, and even this terrible lesson has not—— So do pray advise him."

"I should be very happy; but, when you are my age, you will know it is of little use intruding advice upon people."

"Oh, Mr. Little will treat it with proper respect, coming from one so much older than himself, and better acquainted with this wretched town. Will you not, Mr. Little?" said she, with so cunning a sweetness that the young fellow was entrapped, and assented, before he knew what he was about; then coloured high at finding himself committed.

Mr. Carden reflected a moment. He then said, "I can't take upon myself to tell any man to give up his livelihood. But one piece of advice I can conscientiously give Mr. Little."

"Yes, papa."



"And that is—TO INSURE HIS LIFE."

"Oh, papa!" cried Grace.

As for Henry he was rather amused, and his lip curled satirically.

But the next moment he happened to catch sight of Jael Dence's face: her grey eyes were expanded with a look of uneasiness; and, directly she caught his eye, she fixed it, and made him a quick movement of the head, directing him to assent.

There was something so clear and decided in the girl's manner, that it overpowered Henry, who had no very clear idea to oppose to it, and he actually obeyed the nod of this girl, whom he had hitherto looked on as an amiable simpleton.

"I have no objection to that," said he, turning to Mr. Carden. Then, after another look at Jael, he said, demurely, "Is there any insurance office you could recommend?"

Mr. Carden smiled. "There is only one I have a right to recommend, and that is the 'Gosshawk.' I am a director. But," said he, with sudden stiffness, "I could furnish you with the names of many others."

Henry saw his way clear by this time. "No, sir, if I profit by your advice, the least I can do is to choose the one you are a director of."

Grace, who had latterly betrayed uneasiness and irritation, now rose, red as fire. "The conversation is taking a turn I did not at all intend," said she, and swept out of the room with royal disdain.

Her father apologized carelessly for her tragical exit. "That is a young lady who detests business; but she does not object to its fruits—dresses, lace, footmen, diamonds, and a carriage to drive about in.



On the contrary, she would be miserable without them."

"I should hope she never will be without them, sir."

"I'll take care of that."

Mr. Carden said this rather drily, and then retired for a minute; and Grace, who was not far off, with an ear like a hare, came back soon after."

But in the meantime Henry left his seat and went to Jael, and leaning over her as she worked, said, "There is more in that head of yours than I thought."

"Oh, they all talk before me," said Jael, blushing faintly, and avoiding his eye.

"Jael Dence," said the young man, warmly, "I'm truly obliged to you."

"What for?"

"For your good advice. I didn't see how good it was till after I had taken it."

"I'm afeard Miss Grace gave you better."

"She advised me against my heart. What is the use of that?"

"Ay, young men are wilful."

"Come, come, don't you go back. You are my friend and counsellor."

"That is something," said Jael, in a low voice; and her hands trembled at her side.

"Why, my dear girl, what's the matter?"

"Hush! hush!"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

GRACE came in that moment, with a superb air. She settled herself on the sofa.

"Now it is my turn, if you please. Pray, sir, do you think your life will be any safer for your insuring it? Insuring does not mean that you are not to be killed; but that, when you *are*, for your obstinacy, somebody else will get paid some money, to dance with over your grave."

"I beg your pardon, Grace," said Mr. Carden, entering, with some printed papers in his hand. "That is not the only use of an insurance. He may want to marry, or to borrow a sum of money to begin business; and then a policy of insurance, with two or three premiums paid, smooths the difficulty. Everybody should make a will, and everybody should insure his life."

"Well then, sir, I will do both."

"Stop!" said Mr. Carden, who could now afford to be candid. "First of all you ought to satisfy yourself of the flourishing condition of the company." He handed him a prospectus. "This will show you our capital, and our disbursements last year, and the balance of profit declared. And this gives the balance-sheet of the 'Vulture' and the 'Falcon,' which have assigned their business to us, and are now incorporated in the 'Gosshawk.'"

"Oh, what a voracious bird!" observed Grace. "I hope these other chickabiddies will not prove indigestible. Were they plucked first, papa? or did the 'Gosshawk' swallow them, feathers and all?"



Little laughed heartily at this pert sally, but Mr. Carden winced under it.

Then Grace saw she was not quite weaponless, and added, "After such a meal as that, Mr. Little, you will go down like a crumb."

"Grace, that is enough," said Mr. Carden, rather severely.

Grace held her tongue directly, and the water came into her eyes. Anything like serious remonstrance was a novelty to her.

When Henry had read the papers, Mr. Carden asked him, rather carelessly, what sum he wished to be insured for.

Now Henry had so little wish about the matter, that he had not given it a thought, and the question took him quite aback. He looked helplessly at Jael. To his surprise, she decided on the sum for him, without a moment's hesitation, and conveyed the figure with that dexterity which the simplest of her sex can command whenever telegraphy is wanted. She did it with two unbroken movements: she put up all the fingers of her right hand to her brow, and that meant five; then she turned her hand rapidly, so as to hide her mouth from the others, who were both on her right hand, and she made the word thousand clear, with her lips and tongue, especially the "th."

But the sum staggered Henry; and made him think he must be misinterpreting her.

He hesitated, to gain time. "Hum!" said he, "the sum?"

Jael repeated her pantomime as before.

Still Henry doubted, and, to feel his way, said, half interrogatively, "Five—thou—sand?"



Jael nodded.

"Five thousand pounds," said Henry, as bold as brass.

"Five thousand pounds!" cried Mr. Carden. "A workman insure his life for five thousand pounds!"

"Well, a man's life is worth five thousand pounds, or it is worth nothing. And, sir, how long do you think I shall be a workman, especially in Hillsborough, where from workman to master is no more than hopping across a gutter?"

Mr. Carden smiled approval. "But five thousand pounds! The annual premium will be considerable. May I ask about how much you make a year?"

"Oh, papa!"

"Well, sir, Mr. Cheetham pays me 300*l.* a year, at the rate of, and I can make another 100*l.* by carving at odd times. But, if you doubt my ability, let us stay as we are, sir. It was your proposal, not mine, you know."

"Young man," said Mr. Carden, "never be peppery in business." He said this so solemnly and paternally, it sounded like the eleventh commandment.

To conclude, it was arranged Henry should take the higher class of insurance, which provided for accidents, voyages, everything, and should be insured for 5,000*l.*, provided the physician appointed by the company should pronounce him free from disease.

Henry then rose, and said, sorrowfully, to Grace, "You will not see me here very often now; and never on Saturday afternoon or Monday morning. I am not going to have some blackguard tracking me, and flinging a can of gunpowder in at your window. When I



do come, it will be in the morning, and on a working day; and I shall perhaps go ten miles round to get here. I must be diamond cut diamond, for many a month to come, between the Trades and me." He uttered these words with manly gravity, as one who did not underrate the peril he was resolved to face; and left them with a respectful bow.

"That's a rising man," said Mr. Carden; "and may draw a hundred of his class to the 'Gosshawk.' It was a good stroke of business, quite out of the common."

Grace said not a word, but she shook her head, and looked pained and ill at ease. Jael watched her fixedly.

Henry called at the works that night, and examined the new defences, with Mr. Cheetham. He also bought a powerful magnifying glass; and next morning he came to the factory, examined the cinders, and everything else, with the magnifier, lighted his forge, and resumed his work.

At dinner-time he went out and had his chop, and read the *Liberal*; it contained a letter from Jobson, in reply to the editor.

Jobson deplored the criminal act, admitted that the two Unions had decided no individual could be a forger, a handler, and a cutler; such an example was subversive of all the Unions in the city, based, as they were, on subdivision of crafts. "But," said Mr. Jobson, "we were dealing with the matter in a spirit quite inconsistent with outrages, and I am so anxious to convince the public of this, that I have asked a very experienced gentleman to examine our minute-books, and report accordingly."



This letter was supplemented by one from Mr. Grotait, secretary of the Saw-Grinders, which ran thus:—"Messrs. Parkin and Jobson have appealed to me to testify to certain facts. I was very reluctant to interfere, for obvious reasons; but was, at last, prevailed on to examine the minute-books of those two Unions, and they certainly do prove that on the very evening before the explosion, those trades had fully discussed Mr. \*'s case," (the real name was put, but altered by the editor,) "and had disposed of it as follows: They agreed, and this is entered accordingly, to offer him his travelling expenses (first class) to London, and one pound per week, from their funds, until such time as he should obtain employment. I will only add, that both these secretaries spoke kindly to me of Mr. \*; and, believing them to be sincere, I ventured to advise them to mark their disapproval of the criminal act, by offering him two pounds per week, instead of one pound; which advice they have accepted very readily."

Henry was utterly confounded by these letters.

Holdfast commented on them thus:—

"Messrs. Jobson and Parkin virtually say that if A, for certain reasons, pushes a man violently out of Hillsborough, and B draws him gently out of Hillsborough for the same reasons, A and B cannot possibly be co-operating. Messrs. Parkin and Jobson had so little confidence in this argument, which is equivalent to saying there is no such thing as cunning in trade, that they employed a third party to advance it with all the weight of his popularity and seeming impartiality. But who is this candid person, that objects to assume the judge, and assumes the judge? He is



the treasurer and secretary of an Union, that does not number three hundred persons; yet in that small Union, of which he is dictator, there has been as much rattening, and more shooting, and blowing-up wholesale and retail, with the farcical accompaniment of public repudiation, than in all the other unions put together. We consider the entrance of this ingenious personage on the scene a bad omen, and shall watch all future proceedings with increased suspicion."

Henry had hardly done reading this, when a man came into the works, and brought him his fifteen pounds back from Mr. Jobson, and a line, offering him his expenses to London, and two pounds per week, from the Edge-Tool Forgers' box, till he should find employment. Henry took his money, and sent back word that the proposal came too late; after the dastardly attempt to assassinate him, he should defy the Unions, until they accepted his terms. Jobson made no reply. And Henry defied the Unions.

The Unions lay still, like some great fish at the bottom of a pool, and gave no sign of life or animosity. This did not lull Henry into a false security. He never relaxed a single precaution. He avoided "Woodbine Villa;" he dodged and doubled like a hare, to hide his own abode. But he forged, handled, and finished, in spite of the Unions.

The men were civil to him in the yard, and he had it all his own way, apparently.

He was examined by a surgeon, and reported healthy. He paid the insurance premium, and obtained the policy. So now he felt secure, under the ægis of the Press, and the wing of the "Goss-hawk."



By-and-by, that great fish I have mentioned gave a turn of its tail, and made his placid waters bubble a little.

A woman came into the yard, with a can of tea for her husband, and a full apron. As she went out, she emptied a set of tools out of her apron on to an old grindstone, and slipped out.

The news of this soon travelled into the office, and both Cheetham and Bayne came out to look at them.

They were a set of carving-tools, well made, and highly polished; and there was a scrap of paper with this distich:

We are Hillsborough made,  
Both haft and blade.

Cheetham examined them and said, "Well, they are clever fellows. I declare these come very near Little's: call him down, and let us draw him."

Bayne called to Henry, and that brought him down, and several more, who winded something.

"Just look at these," said Cheetham.

Little coloured: he saw the finger of the Unions at once, and bristled all over with caution and hostility.

"I see them, sir. They are very fair specimens of cutlery; and there are only about twenty tools wanting to make a complete set: but there is one defect in them, as carving-tools."

"What is that?"

"They are useless. You can't carve wood with them. None but a practical carver can design these tools, and then he must invent and make the steel moulds first. Try and sell them in London or Paris,



you'll soon find the difference. Mr. Bayne, I wonder you should call me from my forge to examine 'prentice-work." And, with this, he walked off disdainfully, but not quite easy in his mind, for he had noticed a greedy twinkle in Cheetham's eye.

The next day, all the grinders in Mr. Cheetham's employ, except the scissor-grinders, rose, all of a sudden, like a flock of partridges, and went out into the road.

"What is up now?" inquired Bayne. The answer was, their secretaries had sent for them.

They buzzed in the road, for a few minutes, and then came back to work.

At night there was a great meeting at the "Cutlers' Arms," kept by Mr. Grotait.

At noon next day, all the grinders aforesaid in Mr. Cheetham's employ, walked into the office, and left, each of them, a signed paper to this effect:—

"This is to give you notice that I will leave your service a week after the date thereof." (Meaning "hereof," I presume.)

Cheetham asked several of them what was up. Some replied, civilly, it was a trade matter. Others suggested Mr. Cheetham knew as much about it as they did.

Not a single hot or uncivil word was spoken on either side. The game had been played too often for that, and with results too various.

One or two even expressed a sort of dogged regret. The grinder, Raynolds, a very honest fellow, admitted, to Mr. Cheetham, that he thought it a sorry trick, for a hundred men to strike against one that had had a



squeak for his life. "But no matter what I think, or what I say, I must do what the Union bids me, sir."

"I know that, my poor fellow," said Cheetham. "I quarrel with none of you. I fight you all. The other masters, in this town, are mice, but I'm a man."

This sentiment he repeated very often during the next six days.

The seventh came, and the grinders never entered the works.

Cheetham looked grave. However, he said to Bayne, "Go and find out where they are. Do it cleverly now. Don't be noticed."

Bayne soon ascertained they were all in the neighbouring public-houses.

"I thought so," said Cheetham. "They will come in, before night. They shan't beat me, the vagabonds. I'm a man, I'm not a mouse."

"Orders pouring in, sir," sighed Bayne. "And the grinders are rather behind the others in their work already."

"They must have known that: or why draw out the grinders? How could they know it?"

"Sir," said Bayne, "they say old Smitem is in this one. Wherever he is, the master's business is known, or guessed, heaven knows how; and, if there is a hole in his coat, that hole is hit. Just look at the cleverness of it, sir. Here we are, wrong with the forgers and handlers. Yet they come into the works and take their day's wages. But they draw out the grinders, and mutilate the business. They hurt you as much as if they struck, and lost their wages. But no, they want their wages to help pay the grinders on strike. Your



only chance was to discharge every man in the works, the moment the grinders gave notice."

"Why didn't you tell me so, then?"

"Because I'm not old Smitem. He can see a thing beforehand. I can see it afterwards. I'm like the weatherwise man's pupil; as good as my master, give me time. The master could tell you, at sunrise, whether the day would be wet or dry, and the pupil he could tell you, at sunset: and that is just the odds between old Smitem and me."

"Well, if he is old Smitem, I'm old Fightem."

At night, he told Bayne he had private information, that the grinders were grumbling at being made a catspaw of by the forgers and the handlers. "Hold on," said he; "they will break up before morning."

At ten o'clock, next day, he came down to the works, and some peremptory orders had poured in. "They must wait," said he, peevishly.

At twelve, he said, "How queer the place seems, and not a grindstone going. It seems as still as the grave. I'm a man; I'm not a mouse."

Mr. Cheetham repeated this last fact in zoology three times, to leave no doubt of it in his own mind, I suppose.

At one, he said he would shut up the works rather than be a slave.

At 1.15 he blustered.

At 1.20 he gave in: collapsed in a moment, like a punctured bladder. "Bayne," said he, with a groan, "go to Jobson, and ask him to come and talk this foolish business over."

"Excuse me, sir," said Bayne. "Don't be offended; but you are vexed and worried, and whoever the



Union sends to you will be as cool as marble. I have just heard it is Redcar carries the conditions."

"What, the foreman of my own forgers! Is he to dictate to me?" cried Cheetham, grinding his teeth with indignation.

"Well, sir, what does it matter?" said Bayne, soothingly. "He is no more than a mouthpiece."

"Go for him," said Cheetham, sullenly.

"But, sir, I can't bear that your own workman should see you so agitated."

"Oh, I shall be all right the moment I see my man before me."

Bayne went off, and soon returned with Redcar. The man had his coat on, but had not removed his leathern apron.

Cheetham received him as the representative of the Unions. "Sit down, Redcar, and let us put an end to this little bother. What do you require?"

"Mr. Little's discharge, sir."

"Are you aware he is with me on a month's notice?"

"They make a point of his leaving the works at once, sir; and I was to beg you to put other hands into his room."

"It is taking a great liberty to propose that."

"Nay. They only want to be satisfied. He has given a vast o' trouble."

"I'll give him a month's warning. If I discharge him on the spot, he can sue me."

"That has been thought on. If he sues you, you can talk to the Unions, and they will act with you. But the grinders are not to come in till Little is out."

"Well, so be it then."



"And his rooms occupied by Union men."

"If I swallow the bolus, I may as well swallow the pills. Anything more?"

"The grinders are not to lose their time; a day and a half."

"What! am I to pay them for not working?"

"Well, sir, if we had come to you, of course the forgers and handlers would have paid the grinders for lost time; but, as you have come to us, you will have to pay them."

Cheetham made a wry face; but acquiesced.

"And then, sir," said Redcar, "there's another little matter. The incidental expenses of the strike."

"I don't know what you mean."

"The expenses incurred by the secretaries, and a little present to another gentleman, who advised us. It comes to thirty pounds altogether."

"What!" cried Cheetham, struggling with his rising choler. "You want me to pay men thirty pounds for organizing a strike, that will cost me so dear, and rob me of a whole trade that was worth 300*l.* a year? Why not charge me for the gunpowder you blew up Little with, and spoiled my forge? No, Bayne, no; this is too unjust and too tyrannical. Flesh and blood won't bear it. I'll shut up the works, and go back to my grindstone. Better live on bread and water than live a slave."

Redcar took a written paper out of his pocket. "There are the terms written down," said he. "If you sign them, the strike ends; if you don't, it continues—till you do."

Cheetham writhed under the pressure. Orders were pouring in; trade brisk; hands scarce. Each day



would add a further loss of many pounds for wages, and doubtless raise fresh exactions. He gulped down something very like a sob, and both his hand and his voice shook with strong passion as he took the pen. "I'll sign it; but if ever my turn comes, I'll remember this against you. This shows what they really are, Bayne. Oh, if ever you workmen get power, GOD HELP THE WORLD!"

These words seemed to come in a great prophetic agony out of a bursting heart.

But the representative of the Unions was neither moved by them nor irritated.

"All right," said he, phlegmatically; "the winner takes his bite; the loser gets his bark: that's reason."

Henry Little was in his handling-room, working away, with a bright perspective before him, when Bayne knocked at the door, and entered with Redcar. Bayne's face wore an expression so piteous, that Henry divined mischief at once.

"Little, my poor fellow, it is all over. We are obliged to part with you."

"Cheetham has thrown me over!"

"What could he do? I am to ask you to vacate these rooms, that we may get our half-day out of the grinders."

Henry turned pale, but there was no help for it.

He got up in a very leisurely way; and, while he was putting on his coat, he told Bayne, doggedly, he should expect his month's salary.

As he was leaving, Redcar spoke to him in rather a sheepish way. "Shake hands, old lad," said he: "thou knows one or t'other must win; and there's not a grain of spite against thee. It's just a trade matter."



Henry stood with his arms akimbo, and looked at Redcar. "I was in hopes," said he, grinding his teeth, "you were going to ask me to take a turn with you in the yard, man to man. But I can't refuse my hand to one of my own sort that asks it. There 'tis. After all, you deserve to win, for you are true to each other; but a master can't be true to a man, nor to anything on earth, but his pocket."

He then strolled out into the yard, with his hands in his pockets, and whistled "The Harmonious Blacksmith," very sick at heart.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE strike was over, the grinders poured into the works, and the grindstones revolved. Henry Little leaned against an angle of the building, and listened with aching heart to their remorseless thunder. He stood there disconsolate—the one workman out of work—and sipped the bitter cup, defeat. Then he walked out at the gates, and wandered languidly into the streets. He was miserable, and had nobody to mourn to, for the main cause of his grief lay beneath the surface of this defeat; and how could he reveal it, now, that his ambitious love looked utter madness? Young as he was, he had seen there is no sympathy in the world for any man who loves out of his sphere. Indeed, whatever cures or crushes such a passion, is hailed by the bystanders as a sharp but wholesome medicine.

He sauntered about, and examined all the shops with lack-lustre eye. He looked in at everything, but



observed nothing, scarcely saw anything. All his senses were turned inwards. It was such a pitiable and galling result of a gallant fight. Even the insurance office had got the better of him. It had taken one-third of his savings, and the very next day his trade was gone, and his life in no danger. The "Gosshawk" had plucked him, and the trade had tied his hands. Rack his invention how he would, he could see no way of becoming a master in Hillsborough, except by leaving Hillsborough and working hard and long in some other town. He felt in his own heart the love and constancy to do this; but his reason told him such constancy would be wasted; for, while he was working at a distance, the impression, if any, he had made on her would wear away, and some man born with money would step in and carry her gaily off. This thought returned to him again and again, and exasperated him so at last, that he resolved to go to "Woodbine Villa," and tell her his heart before he left the place. Then he should be rejected, no doubt, but perhaps pitied, and not so easily forgotten as if he had melted silently away.

He walked up the hill, first rapidly, then slowly. He called at "Woodbine Villa."

The answer was, "Not at home."

"Everything is against me," said he.

He wandered wearily down again, and just at the entrance of the town he met a gentleman with a lady on each arm, and one of those ladies was Miss Carden. The fortunate cavalier was Mr. Coventry, whom Henry would have seen long before this, but he had been in Paris for the last four months. He had come back fuller than ever of agreeable gossip, and Grace was



chatting away to him, and beaming with pleasure, as innocent girls do, when out on a walk with a companion they like. She was so absorbed she did not even see Henry Little. He went off the pavement to make room for their tyrannical crinolines, and passed unnoticed.

He had flushed with joy at first sight of her, but now a deadly qualm seized him. The gentleman was handsome and commanding; Miss Carden seemed very happy, hanging on his arm; none the less bright and happy that he, her humble worshipper, was downcast and wretched.

It did not positively prove much: yet it indicated how little he must be to her: and somehow it made him realize more clearly the great disadvantage at which he lay, compared with an admirer belonging to her own class. Hitherto his senses had always been against his reason: but now for once they co-operated with his judgment, and made him feel that, were he to toil for years in London, or Birmingham, and amass a fortune, he should only be where that gentleman was already; and while the workman, far away, was slaving, that gentleman and others would be courting her. She might refuse one or two. But she would not refuse them all.

Then in his despair, he murmured, "Would to God I had never seen her!"

He made a fierce resolve he would go home, and tell his mother she could pack up.

He quickened his steps, for fear his poor sorrowful heart should falter.

But, when he had settled on this course, lo! a fountain of universal hatred seemed to bubble in his



heart. He burned to inflict some mortal injury upon Jobson, Parkin, Grotait, Cheetham, and all who had taken a part, either active or passive, in goading him to despair. Now Mr. Cheetham's works lay right in his way; and it struck him he could make Cheetham smart a little. Cheetham's god was money. Cheetham had thrown him over for money. He would go to Cheetham, and drive a dagger into his pocket.

He walked into the office. Mr. Cheetham was not there: but he found Bayne, and Dr. Amboyne.

"Mr. Bayne," said he, abruptly, "I am come for my month's wages."

The tone was so aggressive, Bayne looked alarmed. "Why, Little, poor Mr. Cheetham is gone home with a bad headache, and a sore heart."

"All the better. I don't want to tell him to his face he is a bragging cur; all I want out of him now is my money: and you can pay me that."

The pacific Bayne cast a piteous glance at Dr. Amboyne. "I have told you the whole business, sir. Oughtn't Mr. Little to wait till to-morrow, and talk it over with Mr. Cheetham? I'm only a servant: and a man of peace."

"Whether he ought or not, I think I can answer for him that he will."

"I can't, sir," said Henry, sturdily. "I leave the town to-morrow."

"Oh, that alters the case. But must you leave us so soon?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am very sorry for that. Tell me your reason. I don't ask out of mere curiosity."

Henry replied with less than his usual candour:



"Is it not reason enough for leaving a place, that my life has been attempted in it, and now my livelihood is taken?"

"Those are certainly strong reasons. But, on the other hand, your life is no longer in danger: and your livelihood is not gone; for, to speak plainly, I came over here the moment I heard you were discharged, to ask you if you would enter my service on the same terms as Mr. Cheetham gave you, only guineas instead of pounds."

"What, turn doctor?"

"Oh dear, no: the doctors' union would forbid that. No, Mr. Little, I am going to ask you to pay me a compliment; to try my service blindfold for one week. You can leave it if you don't like it; but give me one week's trial."

"How can I refuse you that?" said Henry, hanging his head. "You have been a good friend to me. But, sir, mark my words, this place will be my destruction. Well, when am I to begin work?"

"To-morrow at ten."

"So be it," said Henry, wearily, then left the works, and went home; but, as he went, he said to himself, "It is not my doing." And his doublefaced heart glowed and exulted secretly.

He told his mother how the Trades had beaten him, and he was out of work.

Mrs. Little consoled him hypocritically. She was delighted. Then he told her his departure had been delayed by Dr. Amboyne: that made her look a little anxious.

"One question, dear: now the Union has beaten you, they will not be so spiteful, will they?"



"Oh, no. That is all over. The conquerors can afford to be good-natured. Confound them."

"Then that is all I care about. Then do not leave Hillsborough. Why should you? Wait here patiently. You do not know what may turn up."

"What, mother, do *you* want to stay here now?" said Henry, opening his eyes with astonishment.

"Wherever my son is happy and safe from harm, there I wish to stay—of course."

Next morning Henry called on Dr. Amboyne, and found him in his study, teaching what looked a boy of sixteen, but was twenty-two, to read monosyllables. On Little's entrance the pupil retired from his uphill work, and glowered with vacillating eyes. The lad had a fair feminine face, with three ill things in it: a want, a wildness, and a weakness. To be sure Henry saw it at a disadvantage: for vivid intelligence would come now and then across this mild, wild, vacant face, like the breeze that sweeps a farmyard pond.

"Good morning, Little. This is your fellow-workman."

"He does not look up to much," said Henry, with all a workman's bluntness.

"What, you have found him out! Never mind; he can beat the town at one or two things, and it is for these we will use him. Some call him an idiot. The expression is neat and vigorous, but not precise; so I have christened him the Anomaly. Anomaly, this is Mr. Little; go and shake hands with him, and admire him."

The Anomaly went directly, and gazed into Little's face for some time.



He then made his report. "He is beautiful and black."

"I've seen him blacker. Now leave off admiring him, and look at these pictures while I prose. Two thousand philosophers are writing us dead with 'Labour and Capital.' But I vary the bore. 'Life, Labour, and Capital,' is my chant: and, whereas Life has hitherto been banished from the discussion, I put Life in its true place, at the head of the trio. (And Life I divide into long Life, and happy Life.) The subject is too vast to be dealt with all at once; but I'll give you a peep of it. The rustic labourer in the South sells his labour for too little money to support life comfortably. That is a foul wrong. The rustic labourer in the North has small wages, compared with a pitman, or a cutler; but he has enough for health, and he lives longer and more happily than either the pitman or the cutler; so that account is square, in my view of things. But now dive into the Hillsborough trades, and you will find this just balance of Life, Labour, and Capital, regarded in some, but defied in others: a forger is paid as much or more than a dry-grinder, though forging is a hard but tolerably healthy trade, and dry-grinding means an early death after fifteen years of disease and misery. The file-cutters are even more killed and less paid. What is to be done, then? Raise the wages of the more homicidal trades! But this could only be done by all the Unions acting in concert. Now the rival philosophers, who direct the Unions, are all against Democritus—that's myself; they set no value on life. And indeed the most intelligent one, Grotait, smiles blandly on Death, and would grind his scythe for him—at the *statement price*—because that scythe thins the labour-market, and so helps keep up prices."



"Then what can we do? I'm a proof one can't fight the Unions."

"Do? Why, lay hold of the stick at the other end. Let Pseudo-Philosophy set the means above the end, and fix its shortsighted eyes on Labour and Capital, omitting Life. (What does it profit a file-cutter if he gains his master's whole capital and loses his own life?) But you and I, Mr. Little, are true philosophers, and the work we are about to enter on is—saving cutlers' lives."

"I'd rather help take them."

"Of course; and that is why I made the pounds guineas."

"All right, sir," said Henry, colouring. "I don't expect to get six guineas a week for whistling my own tune. How are we to do the job?"

"By putting our heads together. You have, on the side of your temple, a protuberance, which I have noticed in the crania of inventors. So I want you to go round the works, and observe for yourself how Life is thrown gaily away, in a moment, by needless accidents, and painfully gnawed away by steel-dust, stone-grit, sulphuret of lead, &c.; and then cudgel your brain for remedies."

"Sir," said Henry, "I am afraid I shall not earn my money. My heart is not in the job."

"Revenge is what you would like to be at, not Philanthropy—eh?"

"Ay, Doctor." And his black eye flashed fire.

"Well, well, that is natural. Humour my crotchet just now, and perhaps I may humour yours a month or two hence. I think I could lay my hand on the fellow who blew you up."



"What, sir! Ah! tell me that, and I'll do as much philanthropy as you like—after——"

"After you have punched your fellow-creature's head."

"But it is impossible, sir. How can you know? These acts are kept as secret as the grave."

"And how often has the grave revealed its secrets to observant men? Dr. Donne sauntered about among graves, and saw a sexton turn up a skull. He examined it, found a nail in it, identified the skull, and had the murderess hung. She was safe from the sexton and the rest of the parish, but not from a stray observer. Well, the day you were blown up, I observed something, and arrived at a conclusion, by my art."

"What, physic?"

"Oh dear, no; my other art, my art of arts, that I don't get paid for; the art of putting myself in other people's places. I'll tell you. While you lay on the ground, in Mr. Cheetham's yard, I scanned the workmen's faces. They were full of pity and regret, and were much alike in expression—all but one. That one looked a man awakened from a dream. His face was wild, stupid, confused, astonished. 'Hallo!' said I, 'why are your looks so unlike the looks of your fellows?' Instantly I put myself in his place. I ceased to be the Democritus, or laughing philosopher of Hillsborough, and became a low uneducated brute of a workman. Then I asked this brute, viz. myself, why I was staring and glaring in that way, stupidly astonished, at the injured man? 'Were you concerned in the criminal act, ye blackguard?' said I to myself. The next step was to put myself in the place of the criminal. I did so; and I realized that I, the criminal,



had done the act to please the Unions, and expecting the sympathy of all Union workmen to be with me. Also that I, being an ignorant brute, had never pictured to myself what suffering I should inflict. But what was the result? I now saw the sufferer, and did not like my own act; and I found all the sympathy of my fellows went with him, and that I was loathed and execrated, and should be lynched on the spot were I to own my act. I now whipped back to Dr. Amboyne with the theory thus obtained, and compared it with that face; the two fitted each other, and I saw the criminal before me."

"Good heavens! This is very deep."

"No slop-basin was ever deeper. So leave it for the present, and go to work. Here are cards admitting you, as my commissioner, to all the principal works. Begin with —— Stop a moment, while I put myself in your place. Let me see, Cheetham's grinders think they have turned me out of Hillsborough. That mortifies a young man of merit like me. Confound 'em! I should like to show them they have not the power to drive me out. Combine how they will, I rise superior. I forge as they could not forge: that was my real crime. Well, I'll be their superior still. I'm their inspector, and their benefactor, at higher wages than they, poor devils, will ever earn at inspecting and benefiting, or anything else.' Ah! your colour rises. I've hit the right nail. Isn't it an excellent and most transmigratory art? Then begin with Cheetham. By-the-by, the Anomaly has spotted a defective grindstone there. Scrutinize all his departments severely; for no man values his people's lives less, than my good friend



John Cheetham. Away with you both; and God speed you."

Henry walked down the street with the Anomaly, and tried to gauge his intellects.

"What's your real name, my man?"

"Silly Billy."

"Oh, then I'm afraid you can't do much to help me."

"Oh yes, I can, because——"

"Because what?"

"Because I like you."

"Well, that's lucky, any way."

"Billy can catch trout when nobody else can," said the youngster, turning his eyes proudly up to Henry's.

"Oh, indeed! But you see that is not exactly what the Doctor wants us for."

"Nay; he's wrapped up in trout. If it wasn't for Billy and the trout, he'd die right off."

Henry turned a look of silent pity on the boy, and left him in his pleasing illusion. He wondered that Dr. Amboyne should have tacked this biped on to him.

They entered Cheetham's works, and Henry marched grimly into the office, and showed Mr. Bayne his credentials.

"Why, Little, you had no need of that."

"Oh, it is as well to have no misunderstanding with your employer's masters. I visit these works for my present employer, Dr. Amboyne, with the consent of Mr. Cheetham, here written."

"Very well, sir," said Bayne, obsequiously; "and I respectfully solicit the honour of conducting our esteemed visitor."



A young man's ill humour could not stand against this. "Come along, old fellow," said Henry. "I'm a bear, with a sore heart; but who could be such a brute as quarrel with you? Let us begin with the chaps who drove me out—the grinders. I'm hired to philanthropize 'em—d—n 'em."

They went among the dry-grinders first; and Henry made the following observations. The workmen's hair and clothes were powdered with grit and dust from the grindstones. The very air was impregnated with it, and soon irritated his own lungs perceptibly. Here was early death, by bronchitis and lung diseases, reduced to a certainty. But he also learned from the men that the quantity of metal ground off was prodigious, and entered their bodies they scarce knew how. A razor-grinder showed him his shirt: it was a deep buff-colour. "There, sir," said he, "that was clean on yesterday. All the washerwomen in Hillsboro' can't make a shirt of mine any other colour but that." The effect on life, health, and happiness was visible; a single glance revealed rounded shoulders and narrow chests, caused partly by the grinder's position on his horsing, a position very injurious to the organs of breathing, and partly by the two devil's dusts that filled the air; cadaverous faces, the muscles of which betrayed habitual suffering, coughs short and dry, or with a frothy expectoration peculiar to the trade.

In answer to questions, many complained of a fearful tightness across the chest, of inability to eat or to digest. One said it took him five minutes to get up the factory stairs, and he had to lean against the wall several times.

A razor-grinder of twenty-two, with death in his



face, told Henry he had come into that room when he was eleven. "It soon takes hold of boys," said he. "I've got what I shall never get shut on."

Another, who looked ill, but not dying, received Henry's sympathy with a terrible apathy. "I'm twenty-eight," said he; "and a fork-grinder is an old cock at thirty. I must look to drop off my perch in a year or two, like the rest."

Only one, of all these victims, seemed to trouble his head about whether death and disease could be averted. This one complained that some employers provided fans to drive the dust from the grinder, but Cheetham would not go to the expense.

The rest that Henry spoke to accepted their fate doggedly. They were ready to complain, but not to move a finger in self-defence. Their fathers had been ground out young, and why not they?

Indifferent to life, health, and happiness, they could nevertheless be inflamed about sixpence a week. In other words, the money-price of their labour was everything to them, the blood-price nothing.

Henry found this out, and it gave him a glimpse into the mind of Amboyne.

He felt quite confused, and began to waver between hate, contempt, and pity. Was it really these poor doomed wretches who had robbed him of his livelihood? Could men so miscalculate the size of things, as to strike because an inoffensive individual was making complete carving-tools all by himself, and yet not strike, nor even stipulate for fans, to carry disease and death away from their own vitals? Why, it seemed wasting hate, to bestow it on these blind idiots.



He went on to the wet-grinders; and he found their trade much healthier than dry-grinding: yet there were drawbacks. They suffered from the grit whenever a new stone was hung and raced. They were also subject to a canker of the hands, and to colds, coughs, and inflammations, from perspiration checked by cold draughts and drenched floors. These floors were often of mud, and so the wet stagnated and chilled their feet, while their bodies were very hot. Excellent recipe for filling graves.

Here Bayne retired to his books, and Henry proceeded to the saw-grinders, and entered their rooms with no little interest, for they were an envied trade. They had been for many years governed by Grotait, than whom no man in England saw clearer; though such men as Amboyne saw farther. Grotait, by a system of Machiavellian policy, ingeniously devised and carried out, nobly, basely, craftily, forcibly, benevolently, ruthlessly, whichever way best suited the particular occasion, had built a model union; and still, with unremitting zeal and vigilance, contrived to keep numbers down and prices up—which is the great Union problem.

The work was hard, but it was done in a position favourable to the lungs, and the men were healthy brawny fellows; one or two were of remarkable stature.

Up to this moment Silly Billy had fully justified that title. He had stuck to Henry's side like a dog, but with no more interest in the inquiry than a calf. Indeed, his wandering eye and vacant face had indicated that his scanty wits were wool-gathering miles from the place that contained his body.



But, as soon as he entered the saw-grinders' room, his features lighted up, and his eye kindled. He now took up a commanding position in the centre, and appeared to be listening keenly. And he had not listened many seconds before he cried out, "There's the bad music! there! there!" And he pointed to a grindstone that was turning and doing its work exactly like the others. "Oh, the bad music!" cried Billy. "It is out of tune. It says, 'Murder! murder! Out of tune!'"

Henry thought it his duty to inspect the grindstone so vigorously denounced, and, naturally enough, went in front of the grinder. But Billy pulled him violently to the side. "You mustn't stand there," said he. "That is the way they fly when they break, and kill the poor father, and then the mother lets down her hair, and the boy goes crazed."

By this time the men were attracted by the Anomaly's gestures and exclamations, and several left their work, and came round him. "What is amiss, Billy? a flawed stone, eh? which is it?"

"Here! here!" said the boy. "This is the wheel of death. Kill it, break it, smash it, before it kills another father."

Henry spoke to the grinder, and asked him if there was anything amiss with the stone.

The man seemed singularly uneasy at being spoken to: however he made answer sullenly that he had seen better ones, and worse ones, and all.

Henry was, however, aware, that the breaking of a large grindstone, while revolving by steam-power, was a serious, and often a fatal thing; he therefore made a private mark upon the wall opposite the grindstone,



and took his excited companion to Bayne. "This poor lad says he has found a defective grindstone. It is impossible for me to test it while it is running. Will you let us into the works when the saw-grinders have left?"

Bayne hem'd and haw'd a little, but consented. He would remain behind half-an-hour to oblige Little.

Henry gave the Anomaly his dinner, and then inspected the file-cutters in two great works. Here he found suicide reduced to a system. Whereof anon.

Returning, to keep his appointment with Bayne, he met a well-dressed man, who stopped Billy, and accosted him kindly.

Henry strolled on.

He heard their voices behind him all the way, and the man stopped at Cheetham's gate, which rather surprised him. "Has Billy told you what we are at?" said he.

"Yes. But the very look of him was enough. I know Billy, and his ways, better than you do."

"Very likely. What, are you coming in with us?"

"If you have no objection."

The door was opened by Bayne in person. He started at sight of the companion his friend had picked up, and asked him, with marked civility, if there was anything amiss. "Not that I know of," was the reply. "I merely thought that my experience might be of some little service to you in an inquiry of this kind."

"Not a doubt of it, sir," said Bayne, and led the way with his lantern, for it was past sunset. On the road, the visitor asked if anybody had marked the accused stone. Henry said he should know it again. "That is right," said the other.



On entering the room, this personage took Billy by the arm, and held him. "Let us have no false alarms," he said, and blindfolded the boy with his handkerchief in a moment.

And now an examination commenced, which the time and the place rendered curious and striking.

It was a long, lofty room; the back part mainly occupied by the drums that were turned by the driving-power. The power was on the floor above, and acted by means of huge bands that came down through holes in the ceiling and turned the drums. From each of these drums came two leather bands, each of which turned a pulley-wheel, and each pulley-wheel a grindstone, to whose axle it was attached; but now the grindstones rested in the troughs, and the great wheel-bands hung limp, and the other bands lay along loose and serpentine. In the dim light of a single lamp, it all looked like a gigantic polypus with its limbs extended lazily, and its fingers holding semicircular claws: for of the grindstones less than half is visible.

Billy was a timid creature, and this blindfolding business rather scared him: he had almost to be dragged within reach of these gaunt antennæ. But each time they got him to touch a grindstone, his body changed its character from shrinking and doubtful, to erect and energetic, and he applied his test. This boy carried with him, night and day, a little wooden hammer, like an auctioneer's, and with this he now tapped each stone several times, searching for the one he had denounced: and, at each experiment, he begged the others to keep away from him and leave him alone with the subject of his experiment; which they did, and held up the lamp and threw the light on him.



Six heavy grindstones he tapped, and approved, three he even praised and called "good music."

The seventh he struck twice, first gently, then hard, and drew back from it, screaming, "Oh, the bad music! Oh, the wheel of death!" and tried to tear the handkerchief from his eyes.

"Be quiet, Billy," said the visitor, calmly; and, putting his arm round the boy's neck, drew him to his side, and detached the handkerchief, all in a certain paternal way that seemed to betoken a kindly disposition. But, whilst he was doing this, he said to Henry, "Now—you marked a stone in daylight: which was it?"

"No, no, I didn't mark the stone, but I wrote on the wall just opposite. Lend us the light, Bayne. By George, here is my mark right opposite this stone."

"Then Billy's right. Well done, Billy." He put his hand in his pocket and gave him a new shilling. He then inquired of Bayne, with the air of a pupil seeking advice from a master, whether this discovery ought not to be acted upon.

"What would you suggest, sir?" asked Bayne, with equal deference.

"Oh, if I was sure I should not be considered presumptuous in offering my advice, I would say, Turn the stone into the yard, and hang a new one. You have got three excellent ones outside; from Buckhurst quarry, by the look of them."

"It shall be done, sir."

This effective co-operation, on the part of a stranger, was naturally gratifying to Henry, and he said to him: "I should be glad to ask you a question. You seem to know a good deal about this trade——"



A low chuckle burst out of Bayne, but he instantly suppressed it, for fear of giving offence—

“Are serious accidents really common with these grindstones?”

“No, no,” said Bayne, “not common. Heaven forbid.”

“They are not common—in the newspapers,” replied the other. “But,” (to Bayne,) “will you permit me to light these two gaslights for a moment?”

“Well, sir, it is contrary to our rules,—but——”

“All the more obliging of you,” said the visitor, coolly, and lighted them, with his own match, in a twinkling. He then drew out of his waistcoat pocket a double eyeglass, gold-mounted, and examining the ceiling with it, soon directed Henry’s attention to two deep dents and a brown splash. “Every one of those marks,” said he, “is a history, and was written by a flying grindstone. Where you see the dents the stone struck the ceiling;” he added, very gravely, “and, when it came down again, ask yourself, did it *always* fall right? These histories are written only on the ceiling and the walls. The floor could tell its tales too; but a crushed workman is soon swept off it, and the wheels go on again.”

“That is too true,” said Henry. “And it does a chap’s heart good to hear a gentleman like you——”

“I’m not a gentleman. I’m an old Saw.”

“Excuse me, sir, you look like a gentleman, and talk like one.”

“And I try to conduct myself like one: but I *am* an old Saw.”

“What! and carry a gold eyeglass?”



"The Trade gave it me. I'm an old Saw."

"Well then, all the better, for you can tell me, and please do: have you ever actually known fatal accidents from this cause?"

"I have known the light grinders very much shaken by a breaking stone, and away from work a month after it. And, working among saw-grinders, who use heavy stones, and stand over them in working, I've seen——Billy, go and look at thy shilling, in the yard, and see which is brightest, it or the moon. Is he gone? I've seen three men die within a few yards of me. One, the stone flew in two pieces; a fragment, weighing about four hundredweight I should say, struck him on the breast, and killed him on place; he never spoke. I've forgotten his very name. Another; the stone went clean out of window, but it kicked the grinder backwards among the machinery, and his head was crushed like an eggshell. But the worst of all was poor Billy's father. He had been warned against his stone; but he said he would run it out. Well, his little boy, that is Billy, had just brought him in his tea, and was standing beside him, when the stone went like a pistol-shot, and snapped the horsing chains like thread; a piece struck the wall, and did no harm, only made a hole; but the bigger half went clean up to the ceiling, and then fell plumb down again; the grinder he was knocked stupid like, and had fallen forward on his broken horsing; the grindstone fell right on him, and, ah,—I saw the son covered with the father's blood."

He shuddered visibly, at the recollection. "Ay," said he, "the man a corpse, and the lad an idiot."



One faulty stone did that, within four yards of me, in a moment of time."

"Good heavens!"

"I was grinding at the next stone but one. He was taken, and I was left. It might just as well have been the other way. No saw-grinder can make sure, when he gets on his horsing, that he will come off it alive."

The visitor left Henry to think of this while he drew Bayne aside, and spoke on another matter.

Afterwards, all three left the works together; and Henry was so pleased with his new ally, that he told him, at the gate, he should be glad if he might be allowed to make his acquaintance.

"By all means," said the other. "I am quite at your service. You will find me at the 'Cutlers' Arms.'"

"Who shall I ask for?"

"George Grotait."

"Grotait. The devil!"

"No, no. Not quite so bad as that."

"What," said Henry, roughly, "do you mean to say you are Old Smitem?"

"That is a name *fools* give me."

Henry had no reply ready, and so the sturdy old secretary got the better of him again, and went his way unruffled.

Henry scolded Bayne for not telling him. Bayne excused himself on the ground that he thought everybody knew Grotait. He added, "He knew you, and told me if he could serve you, without being unjust to the Trades, I was to tell him."



Henry replied to this only by a snort of defiance, and bade him good-night.

The next day and the next were spent in other works, and then Henry, having no more facts to learn, fell into deep dejection again. He saw he must either cheat Dr. Amboyne, by shamming work, or else must leave Hillsborough.

He had the honesty to go to the Doctor and say that he had mastered the whole matter, and didn't see his way to take any more wages from a friend.

"You mean you have mastered the broad facts."

"I have, sir, and they are beyond belief; especially the file-cutters. They are the most numerous of all the Trades, and die like sheep. If your notion about Life, Labour, and Capital is right, the Trades are upside down; for the deadliest are the worst paid."

"And you are prepared with the remedies."

"Not I."

"Yet you fancy you are at the end of your work. Why, you are only beginning. Now comes the real brain work; invention. Now are craniology and you upon your trial. But you are quite right about weekly salary. Invention must not be so degraded, but paid by the piece. Life, Labour, and Capital are upside down in this place, are they? Then you shall be the man to set them on their legs."

Henry shook his head. "Never, sir, unless I could give the masters bowels, and the men brains."

"Well, and why not? To invention all things are possible. You carry a note-book?"

"Yes, sir."

"Got it in your pocket?"

"No; on my shoulders."



"Haw! haw! haw! Then write this down in it—  
'THERE'S A KEY TO EVERY LOCK.'"

"It's down, sir."

"Now you must go out trout-fishing with Billy. He will take you on the hills, where the air is pure, and favourable to invention. You will divert your mind from all external subjects, especially Billy, who is a fool, and his trout-killing inhumane, and I a merciless glutton for eating them; and you will think, and think, and think, and forge the required key to this lock with three wards—Life, Labour, Capital. And, when forged, the Philanthropic Society shall pay you a good price for it. Meantime, don't dream of leaving Hillsborough, or I shall give you a stirrup-cup that will waft you much farther than London; for it shall be of 'prussic acid all composed,' or 'juice of cursed Hebenon in a phial.' Come, away with you."

"Good-by, Doctor. God bless you. You have found 'the key to my heart' somehow. I come to you a miserable broken-hearted dog, and you put life and hope into me directly. I declare talking with you it's like drinking sunshine. I'll try all I know to please you."

He went down the street with his old elastic tread, and muttered to himself, "There's no lock without a key."

Next day he went out on the hills with Billy, and saw him tickle trout, and catch them under stones, and do many strange things, and all the time he thought of Grace Carden, and bemoaned his sad fate. He could not command his mind, and direct it to philanthropy. His heart would not let him, and his personal wrongs were too recent. After a short



struggle, these got so thoroughly the better, that he found himself stealing the Doctor's words for his own purposes. "No lock without a key." Then there must be some way of outwitting these cursed Trades, and so making money enough to set up as a master, and then court her, and woo her, and marry her. Heaven seemed to open on him at this prospect, and he fell into a deep reverie. By-and-by, as he pondered, it seemed to him as if the shadow of a coming idea was projected in advance of the idea itself. He knew somehow there was a way to baffle his enemies, and resume his business, and yet he could not see the way; but still he was absolutely conscious it existed.

This conviction took such hold of him, that he became restless, and asked Billy to leave off and come away. The youth consented, and they returned to the town with a basket of trout. Henry sent Billy on to the Doctor with half of them, and took the other half to his friend Bayne.

On what a trifle things turn. Bayne was very much pleased with his little attention, and asked him to take them to his lodging, and beg the landlady to cook them for dinner. "Tell her you dine with me, old fellow."

"Oh, hang it, I wasn't fishing for a dinner."

"As if I didn't know that. But you must. Then I shall enjoy your company in peace. I shall be there in an hour."

And so he was: but in that one hour events had occurred that I shall leave Mr. Bayne to relate.

During dinner neither of the friends wasted much time in talk: but, after dinner, Bayne produced a bottle of port, notwithstanding Henry's remonstrances



at being treated like a stranger, and it soon became apparent that the host himself was not in the habit of drinking that generous mixture every day. At the second glass he so far forgot himself as to utter the phrase "Eternal Friendship," and, soon after, he began to writhe in his chair, and, at last, could no longer refrain himself, but told Henry that Miss Carden had been canvassing customers. She had just sent in six orders for sets of carving-tools, all for friends of her own.

Henry coloured to the temples at this unexpected proof that she he loved thought of him too.

"Oh, Bayne," cried the poor young man, almost choking, "I little thought—God bless her!"

"Let us drink her health," said Bayne, excitedly.

"Ah, that I will!" And this was the first glass Henry drank honestly.

"Now, Little, I'm not doing quite right, you know; but I *must* tell you. When we lost you—you know that set of tools the Union dropped in our yard—well, he sent them to London for yours."

"That is just like him," said Henry, bitterly.

"And I'll tell you a good joke; they were in the place when you called, only not unpacked till just before I came away. Returned, sir! with a severe reprimand. 'Wonder you should send us such things as these for carving-tools by Little. If the error is not repaired shall consider ourselves at liberty to communicate direct with that workman.' A regular sugar-plum."

"Oh, thank you, my kind friend, for telling me. The world isn't all bitterness, after all: a poor fellow gets a sweet drop of friendship now and then."



"Yes, and a good drop of port now and then, though I say it that shouldn't. Fill up. Well, my boy, Cheetham is in a fine way. I left him walking about the office like a hyena. So now is your time. You can't fight the Trades; but, if Cheetham will go in with you, and I know he will, for he is sorer than you are, you can trick the Trades yet."

"Ah! tell me how, that is all."

"Oh, I can't tell you exactly. I'll try, though. I say, what a glorious thing the Ruby is: it inspires us, and fires us, etcetera, and gives us ideas beyond our sphere. Did you ever see one of these new portable forges?"

"No, never heard of them."

"No wonder; they are just out. Well, buy one of them—they were invented here—and carry it to some dismal cavern, where the foot of man never treads: make Cheetham grind your blades in another county: and who will ever know? Go to him, and don't say a word, but just ask him for your month's salary. Then he will open the door of business himself—safe. I'll drink his health. He's not a bad sort, Cheetham: only he'd sell his soul for money. I hate such rubbish; here's 'Perdition to the lot and no heel-taps.'"

These words of fire set Henry pondering deeply; and, as he pondered, Bayne stuck to the port, and so effectually, that, at last, after an interval of silence, he came out in a new character. He disturbed his companion's reverie by informing him, in a loud aggressive tone, that it had long been his secret wish to encounter the Hillsborough Trades, in the persons of their secretaries, under the following conditions; a twenty-four feet ring: an experienced referee: and a kingdom



looking on. As to the order of the pugilistic events, he was not unreasonably fastidious; must stipulate to begin with old Smitem; but, after that, they might encounter their fate in any order they chose, one down t'other come on. He let him know that this ardent desire for single combats, in an interminable series, arose from their treatment of his friend—"the best friend—the best heart—oh!—the best company—oh! oh!—the best—oh! oh! oh!" Whereupon he wept, the bellicose Bayne. And, after weeping the usual quantity, he twaddled, and, after twaddling, he became as pacific as ever, for he went to sleep in his chair.

And, while he snoozed, the words he had uttered set his friend's brain boiling and bubbling.

When the time came at which Bayne ought to return to the works, Henry called the landlady, and said, "Mr. Bayne is not very well. I am going to make his excuses. I wouldn't disturb him till five, if I was you, and then I'd give him a strong cup of tea."

Henry then went direct to the office, and found Mr. Cheetham there.

"Well?" said Mr. Cheetham, rather surlily.

"I am come to ask for my month, sir."

"So I guessed. Do you really mean to exact that?"

"Why not, sir?"

"Haven't you heard how they ground me down?"

"Yes, sir. But why did you give in? I was true to you, but you failed me. I'd have shut up the works for three months, rather than be made a slave of, and go from my word."

"Ay, ay; that's bachelor's talk. I've got a wife and children; and they make a man a mouse."



"Well, sir, I forgive you: but as to my month's wages—now all I say is—PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE!"

"Well?"

"You are me. You are brought from London, under an agreement, a month's notice on either side. You work, and give satisfaction. You are threatened, but you don't run from your employer. You are blown up, and nearly killed. You lose a fortnight, but you don't charge for it; 'twasn't your employer's fault. You come back to him, and face the music again. You work with the sword hanging over you. But your employer gives in, and sacks you in a minute. Oughtn't you to have your month? Come now, man to man, oughtn't you?"

"I ought, and that's the truth. I didn't look at it that way. I saw my own side. There—no more about it—I'll draw the cheque—with a good heart."

He drew his cheque-book to him, with a face as if vultures were tearing his vitals.

When Henry found him Amboynable, and saw his piteous looks, he felt a little softened towards him, and he said, very impressively, "Wait one moment, sir, I've got an idea. I'm not the sort that likes to be beat. Are *you*?" The men looked steadily at each other.

Cheetham lowered his voice: "I've had hell inside me ever since. I thought I was a man, but they made a mouse of me. If you know any way to beat them, I'll go in with you."

"Well, sir, there's a key to every lock."

"That is well said, and I believe it; but one can't always find the key."



"I almost think I have, sir."

"See nobody is listening. Where is Bayne? He is due."

"Oh, he is not very well, sir; and I was to ask you for an hour's absence."

"Let him have the whole afternoon. I'll not have a soul in this but us two. Now come close, and tell me."

They sat opposite each other, and put their heads together over the table, and the following dialogue passed almost in a whisper. To see them, you would have thought they were conspiring against the law, instead of combining to hide a lawful act from the violators of the law.

"I can forge the blades a dozen miles from Hillsborough."

"Not you; you will be told of. That won't do."

"I shall not be told of; for nobody will know but you. I shall only forge at night; and the building is out of the world, and wedged in, out of sight, between two bleak hills. Sir, it is a deserted church."

"What, forge blades in a church?"

"A deserted church; why not?"

"Little, you are A 1. Go on."

"I can get the blades ground by a friend at Birmingham; and my mother and I can put them together at home. The complete articles will come to you in parcels of a certain coloured paper, invoiced in cipher outside, so that they need not be opened; you can trust the invoice, and despatch them to your London agent."

"All right."



"The steel you must supply me at the current price, and charge it against me."

"Certainly. But your price per gross? For this work can't be done by time."

"Of course not." And Henry named a price per gross at which Cheetham lifted up his hands. "Why, you'll take nine pounds a week at that!"

"Ay, and more," said Henry, coolly. "But I sha'n't make it. Why, this scheme entails no end of expenses. A house, and stables with back entrance. A swift horse, to gallop to the forge at sunset, and back by noon. A cart to take the things to the railway and back, and to the parcel delivery for you. And, besides that, I must risk my neck, riding over broken ground at night; and working night and day shortens life. You can't reduce these things to Labour and Capital. It's Life, Labour, and Capital."

"Hallo! There's a new cry. I tell ye what; you know too much for me. You read the *Beehive*. I take you at your price."

Then he had a misgiving. "That old Smitem's as crafty as a fox. If he finds you stay here, with no visible employment, he will soon be down on us."

"Ay; but in the daytime I shall appear as a carver of wood, and also an inspector of factories for Dr. Amboyne. Who will suspect me of a night trade, as well as two day trades?"

Cheetham slapped the table triumphantly; but, recovering his caution, he whispered, "It's planned first-rate."

"And now, sir, there is one difficulty you must help me in, if you please. It is to set up the forge unobserved."



"What, am I to find the forge?"

"There's a question, sir! Of course you are. One of these new portable forges."

Cheetham reflected for some little time. He then said it was a ticklish thing, and he saw but one way. "The forge must come here, after closing hours, and you and I must fetch it away in the dead of night, and take it down to the old church, and set it up."

"Well, but, sir, we shall want assistance."

"Nay, nay. I've got the last suit of moleskin I ever worked in laid away. I'll air 'em, and put 'em on again; and, when I've got 'em on once more, I shall feel a man again. I'll have neither fool nor spy in it; the thing is too serious. I might bring some country fellow, that can't read or write; but no, these portables are small things, and I'm one of the strongest men in Hillsborough. Best keep it to ourselves. When is it to be?"

"Say next Wednesday, two hours after midnight."

"Then that is settled. And now I'll square the old account, as agreed." He drew his cheque-book towards him again.

But Henry stopped him. "Fair play's a jewel," said he, smiling. "The moment you sacked me——"

"Say the Trades, not me."

"Dr. Amboyne hired me, at six guineas a week, to inspect the works. "So you owe me nothing; but to be true to me."

This trait, though it was one of simple probity, astonished and gratified Mr. Cheetham. He looked on the young man with marked respect. "You are hard; but you are very square. I'll be true as steel to you, and we'll outwit our tyrants together, till I get a



chance to put my foot on them. Yes, I'll be open with you; there are plenty of orders from London and the Continent, and one for six sets from swells in Hillsborough."

"Might I see that order?"

"Why not? There, run your eye over it. I want to go into the packing-room for a minute."

He then tossed Henry the order, as if it was nothing more than an order.

But it was a great deal more than that to Henry. It was Grace Carden's handwriting, the first specimen he had ever seen.

He took the paper in his hand, and a slight perfume came from it that went to his heart. He devoured the delicately formed letters, and they went to his heart too: he thrilled all over. And the words were as like her as the perfume. She gave the order, and the addresses of her friends, with a pretty little attempt at the business-like; but, this done, she burst out, "and we all entreat you to be good to poor Mr. Little, and protect him against the wicked, cruel, abominable Unions."

These sweet words made his heart beat violently, and brought the tears of tenderness into his eyes. He kissed the words again and again. He put them into his bosom, and took them out again, and gloated over them till they danced before his manly eyes. Then his love took another turn: he started up, and marched and strutted, like a young stag, about the room, with one hand pressing the paper to his bosom. Why had he said Wednesday? It could all have been got ready on Tuesday. No matter, he would make up for that



lost day. He was on the road, once more, the road to fortune, and to her.

Cheetham came in, and found him walking excitedly, with the paper in his hand, and of course took the vulgar view of his emotion.

"Ay, lad," said he, "and they are all swells, I promise you. There's Miss Laura Craske. That's the mayor's daughter. Lady Betty Tyrone. She's a visitor. Miss Castleton! Her father is the county member."

"And who is this Mr. Coventry?" asked Henry.

"Oh, he is a landed gentleman, but spends his tin in Hillsborough; and you can't blame him. Mr. Coventry? Why, that is Miss Carden's intended."

"Her intended!" gasped Henry.

"I mean her beau. The gentleman she is going to marry, they say."

Henry Little turned cold, and a tremor ran through him; but he did not speak a word; and, with Spartan fortitude, suppressed all outward sign of emotion. He laid the paper down patiently, and went slowly away.

Loyal to his friend even in this bitter moment, he called at Bayne's place, and left word with the landlady that Mr. Bayne was not wanted at the works any more that day.

But he could not bear to talk to Bayne about his plans. They had lost their relish. He walked listlessly away, and thought it all over.

For the first time he saw his infatuation clearly. Was ever folly like his? If she had been a girl in humble life, would he not have asked whether she had a sweetheart? Yet he must go and give his heart to a lady without inquiry. There, where wisdom and



prudence were most needed, he had speculated like an idiot. He saw it, and said to himself, "I have acted like a boy playing at pitch-farthing, not like a man who knew the value of his heart."

And so he passed a miserable time, bemoaning the treasure that was now quite inaccessible instead of nearly, and the treasure of his own heart he had thrown away.

He awoke with a sense of misery and deep depression, and could not eat; and that was a novelty in his young and healthy life. He drank a cup of tea, however, and then went out, to avoid his mother's tender looks of anxious inquiry. He meant to tell her all one day; but to-day he was not strong enough. He must wait till he was cured; for cured he must be, cured he would be.

He now tried to give his mind to the task Amboyne had set him; but it was too hard: he gave it up, with rage and despair.

Then he made a desperate resolve, which will not surprise those who know the human heart. He would harden himself. He would see more of Miss Carden than ever; only it should be in quite a new light. He would look at her, and keep saying to himself all the time, "You are another man's wife."

With this determination, he called at "Woodbine Villa."

Miss Carden was not at home.

"Are you sure she is not at home?"

"Not at home," replied the man stiffly.

"But you needn't to keep him at the door," said a mellow female voice.

"No, Miss," said the man, with a sudden change



of manner, for he was a desperate and forlorn admirer of the last speaker. "Come in, sir." And he ushered him in to Jael Dence. She was in her bonnet, and just going out. They shook hands, and she told him Miss Carden was out walking.

"Walking with her beau?" said Henry, affecting a jaunty air, but sick within.

"That's more than I can say," replied Jael.

"You know nothing about it, of course," said Henry, roughly.

Jael looked surprised at the uncalled-for tone, and turned a mild glance of inquiry and reproach upon him.

The young man was ashamed of himself, and at that moment, too, he remembered he had already been rather ungrateful to her. So, to make amends, he said, "Didn't I promise to take you to Cairnhope?"

"Ay," said Jael; and she beamed and blushed in a moment.

"Well, I must go there, Sunday at the latest. So I will come for you, if you like. Will you be ready at ten o'clock?"

"Yes."

"I'll bring a gig, and take you like a lady."

"Any way you please. I'd as lieve walk as ride."

"I prefer riding. Ten o'clock, the day after tomorrow. Good-by."

And he hurried away, provoked, not pleased, at the manifest pleasure he had given. The woman he loved—inaccessible! The woman he only liked—he could spend the whole day with her. So the reasonable youth was cross with her for that, and for being so pleased, when he was wretched.



That feeling soon wore off, however, and, being a man of business, he wrote a line to Martha Dence, and told her he should visit her on Sunday. He added, with a gleam of good humour, "and look out, for I shall bring my lass," intending to give them all an agreeable surprise; for Jael, he knew, was an immense favourite.

Next day he went on the hills with Billy, and, instead of thinking for the benefit of his enemies, as agreed with Amboyne, he set himself to hate everybody, especially Miss Carden's lover, and the Hillsborough Unions. The grinders and file-cutters might die like sheep. What did he care? As much as they cared for him. Dr. Amboyne was too good for this world, and should keep his money to himself. He (Henry Little) would earn none of it, would take none of it. What invention he had, should all go to outwit the Trades, and turn that old ruffian's church into his own smithy. This double master-stroke, by which he was to defeat one enemy, and secretly affront another, did make him chuckle once or twice, not with joy, but with bitterness.

He awoke in a similar mood next morning: but there was eight o'clock service near, and the silver-toned bell awakened better thoughts. He dressed hurriedly, and went to church.

He came back sadder, but rather less hot, less bitter; he had his breakfast, improved his toilet, went to the livery-stable, and drove to "Woodbine Villa."

Mr. and Miss Carden had just finished breakfast, when he drove up to the door.

"Who is this?" said Mr. Carden.

"What, have you forgotten Mr. Little?"



"Indeed! Why, how he is dressed. I took him for a gentleman."

"You were not very far wrong, papa. He is a gentleman at heart."

Jael came in, equipped for the ride. She was neatly dressed, and had a plain shepherd's-plaid shawl, that suited her noble bust. She looked a picture of health and happiness.

"If you please, Miss, he is come to take me to Cairnhope."

"Oh! it is for that! And I declare you expected him, too."

"Yes," said Jael, and blushed.

"You never told me," said Grace, with a slight touch of asperity.

"I didn't feel very sure he would keep his word."

"Then you don't know him as well as I do."

"I haven't the chance. He speaks a deal more to you than he do to me."

"Well, Jael, you needn't snub me, because you are going with Mr. Little."

As a bone, put between two friendly dogs, causes a growl, so when a handsome young man enters on the scene, I have seen young women lose a little of that unmitigated sweetness which marked them a moment before.

With Grace, however, to snap and to repent generally followed in a breath. "I hope you will have a happy day, dear, as happy as you deserve." She then went to kiss her, but gave her cheek, instead of her lips. "There," said she, in rather a flurried way, "don't keep Mr. Little waiting."

Just as they drove off, Grace came to the window,



after a slight irresolution, and kissed her hand to them enchantingly; at which a sudden flood of rapture rushed through Little's heart, and flushed his cheek, and fired his dark eye; Grace caught its flash full in hers, and instinctively retired a step. They were off.

"How bright and happy they look," said she to her father. And no wonder.

She sat down, and, somehow, she felt singularly dull and lonely.

Then she dressed for church, languidly. Then she went to church. By-and-by she came back from church.

Then she sat down, in her bonnet, and felt alone in the world, and sad; and, at last, she found herself quietly crying, as young ladies will sometimes, without any visible cause.

Then she asked herself what on earth she was crying about, and herself told her she was a little hysterical fool, and wanted a good beating.

Then she plucked up spirit, and dried her eyes. Then she took to yawning, and said Sunday was a dull day, and life itself rather a wearisome thing.

Then a servant came to inquire if she was at home.

"What, on Sunday? Of course not. Who is it?"

"Mr. Coventry, Miss."

"I am at home."



## CHAPTER X.

PEOPLE that met Jael Dence and Henry Little driving to Cairnhope were struck with their faces; his so dark, hers so fair, and both so handsome: but the woman's lit up with lively delight, the man's clouded and sorrowful, and his brow knit with care. This very day he must take the lock off Cairnhope old Church, in spite of his uncle Raby. He had got the requisite tools with him hidden in the gig; but, even should he succeed, it was but the first step of a difficult and, perhaps, dangerous enterprise; and he was entering on it all with a heart no longer buoyed by hopeful love. But for his pledge to Mr. Cheetham, he could hardly have persisted in the struggle.

As for Jael Dence, she had no great reason to be happy either: the man she loved loved another. Still he was kind to *her*, and they belonged to the same class; she had a chance, and gleams of hope. And, after all, the future was uncertain, but the present certain; she had him to herself for the day. She was close to him—so close, that she could feel him,—and he was driving her out, and to those who loved her: she basked in the present delight, and looked as if she was being taken to heaven by an angel, instead of driven to Cairnhope by a gloomy young man, whom the passers-by envied, and wondered at his good luck in having such a companion. She talked to him, and got the short answers of an absent man. But she continued to make her little remarks occasionally, and, ere they reached Cairnhope, he found



himself somehow soothed by her sex, her beauty, and her mellow, kindly voice.

As they drove up to the farm-house, he told her to hide her face a moment, for they didn't know who it was.

Martha ran out. "Y'are welcome, y'are welcome; and so is your—— Eh! Why it's our Jael. 'Tis no avail to hide thy face, thou jade; I know every bit o' thee." And Patty had her out of the gig in a moment, and there was a cuddling match it did one good to see.

Henry perked up for a moment and offered a suggestion. "Some of that ought to come my way, for bringing her here."

"Oh, you'll get enough o' that fun before you die," said Patty. "Now come you in; the carter's boy will take the horse."

They went in and greeted the old farmer; and soon the bell began to ring for church, and Nathan Dence told Martha to put on her bonnet.

"La, father!" said she, piteously.

"She prefers to stay at home and chat with Jael," said Henry. The fact is, he wanted to be rid of them both.

Old Dence shook his head. He was one of those simple, grand, old rustic Christians, who have somehow picked out the marrow of religion, and left the devil the bone, yclept Theology. "What?" said he, "my lasses! can't ye spare God a slice out of his own day?"

"Nay, it is not that, father."

The old man continued his remonstrance. "To be sure our Jael is a cordial. But she'll dine and sup



with us. Take my word for't, all lawful pleasures are sweeter on the Lord's day after a bit o' church."

"And so they are, father; but dear heart! to think of you forgetting. Will nobody tell him? They're sworn to give me a red face, Jael and all."

This piteous appeal set Jael's wits working. "Eh, father, it will be the first of her banns!"

"Is it me you are asking such a question?" cried Patty, and turned her head away with absurd mock-modesty.

"And so 'tis," said Dence; "ah, that is a different thing."

Henry thought that was no reason for Patty's staying at home; she ought rather to go and hear the banns were cried all right.

At this proposal both sisters lifted up their hands, and he was remonstrated with, and lectured, and at last informed that, if a girl was in church when her banns were cried, her children would be all born deaf and dumb.

"Oh, indeed!" said Little, satirically. "That's a fact in natural history I was not aware of. Well, farmer, then let's you and I go by ourselves."

So Patty stayed at home, in obedience to rural superstition, and Jael stayed to keep her company, Farmer Dence went to church out of piety; and as for Henry, to tell the truth, he went to church to escape the girls' tongues, and to be in a quiet, somniferous place, where he could think out his plans undisturbed.

The men were no sooner gone, than the sisters began to gossip hard.

"Eh, Jael, thou's gotten a prize."



"Not as I know of."

"I do adore a dark young man."

"So do I; but this one is not mine."

"I'll take his word before thine. Why he calls thee his lass in his very letter."

"Not he. Show me his letter."

"What will ye give me?"

"Nay, Patty, pray show it me."

"Well, and so I will."

She brought her the letter. Jael read it and changed colour, and was delighted for a moment or two; but soon her good sense and humility prevailed. "'Twas to surprise you, like. I do know he looks higher than me."

"More fool he. But I don't believe it."

"You may," said Jael, and turned the conversation to Patty's approaching marriage; once launched in that direction, it flowed without intermission till the men returned, and dinner smoked upon the board.

After dinner Henry watched an opportunity, and slipped out into the yard, got the tools out, put his great-coat over them, and away to Cairnhope Church. He knew better than go past Raby Hall to it; he went back towards Hillsborough, full three miles, and then turned off the road and got on the heather. He skirted the base of a heathery mound, and at last saw the church on an elevation before him, made for it incautiously over some boggy ground, and sank in up to his waist.

He extricated himself with considerable difficulty, and cast a woeful look at his clothes.

Then he turned to, and piled up a heap of stones to mark the dangerous spot; for he foresaw he must



often travel that way in all weathers. At last he reached the church, removed the lock, and fastened the door with screws. He then went back to the farm as fast as he could. But all this had taken a long time, and the sun was sinking as he got into the yard. He was in the very act of concealing the lock in the gig, when Martha Dence came out at him, as red as a turkey-cock.

"You thought but little of my sister, young man, to leave her all these hours, and you come out to spend the day with her."

"Stuff and nonsense! I came out on my own business."

"So it seems. And it have taken you into worse company. A fine figure she has made you."

"Who?"

"The hussy you have been after this while."

"That's so like you girls. You think a man has nothing to do but to run after women."

"What business can you have on the Sabbath-day, I'd like to know?"

"Would you? Well, I'll tell you—when I tell the bellman."

"You are quite right, Mr. Little. Trust none but friends."

This was a bitter remark. Henry could not reply to it, and that moved his bile. Patty pursued her advantage, and let him know that, when a young man brought a young woman out for the day, he did not leave her for three hours at a stretch, unless he meant to affront her. She raised her voice in saying this, and so did he in replying, "Tell you I came out on my own business, not Iael's; but, I am a good-natured



fellow, considering all I endured, so I took that opportunity to bring your sister out to see you. Could I guess you two couldn't make yourselves happy for one afternoon without flirting? So much for sisterly affection! Well, next time I'll come alone—if I come at all."

Jael came out at the raised voices, and received this last sentence full in the face. She turned pale.

"Oh, Patty, Patty, what have you been saying?"

"I've been speaking my mind, that is all."

"Ay, and you've made him say the only unkind word I ever heard from his lips."

"I'm very sorry, Jael," said the young man, penitently.

"Oh, then I'm to blame, because he is so ill-tempered." And Patty bridled.

"Partly. You should not interfere between friends." Having delivered this admonition, Jael softened it by kissing her, and whispered, "Father's asking for his tea."

Patty went in as meek as Moses.

Then Jael turned to Harry, and laid her hand on his arm, while her grey eyes searched his face. "There's something amiss. You are never cross, except when you are unhappy. What is it?"

"Oh, Jael, my heart is broken. She is going to be married."

"Who says so?"

"Mr. Cheetham told me she was engaged to a Mr. Coventry."

"What can Mr. Cheetham know? To be sure the gentleman is a good deal with her, and I hear he has courted her this two years; and she likes his company,



that's certain. But she is used to be admired, and she is very hard to please."

"What, then, you think it is not quite hopeless?"

"While there's life, there's hope."

"What had I better do?"

"Nay, you shouldn't ask me."

"Oh, yes: you advised me so wisely about the insurance."

"Ay, but then I saw clear. He is purse-proud, and I knew he'd think a deal more of you if you insured your life for a vast o' money. But now I don't see clear: and I'm loth to advise. Happen you'd hate me afterwards if it went wrong."

"No, no, I wouldn't be so ungrateful."

Jael shook her head, doubtfully.

"Well, then," said Henry, "don't advise me; but put yourself in my place. (I'll tell you a secret I daren't trust to Patty. I have found a way to beat the Trades, and make my fortune in a year or two.) Now what would you do, if you were me?"

This question raised a tumult in Jael's heart. But her strong will, her loyalty, and, above all, her patience, conquered, though not without signs of the struggle, a bosom that heaved somewhat higher, and a low voice that trembled a little. "If I was a young man, I wouldn't shilly-shally, nor wait till I was rich, before I spoke. I'd have it out with her. I'd get her alone, and tell her all. Then, if she showed any sign of liking, I'd beg her to wait a bit, and say I'd soon be a gentleman for her sake. And, if she cares nought for you, better know it, and leave her, than fare in heaven one hour and in hell the next, as I have seen thee do this while, my poor lad."



"It is wise and good advice, and I'll take it. I've kept all my courage for the Trades; I'd better have shown her a little. But there's one thing more I want to ask you."

This was too much. Jael's courage and patience failed her for once. "Keep it," she cried almost wildly. "I can't bear no more. There's not one lass in a hundred would do what I have done for you; yet you want more. D'ye think I'm not flesh and blood, as well as her?"

And she began to cry bitterly.

This took Henry quite by surprise, and grieved him. He consoled her, and coaxed her, in vague terms, that did not produce any effect. So then he kissed her cheek, and dried her eyes with his own handkerchief, and that was not quite so ineffectual. She gave a final sob, and said, with some slight remains of passion, "There, there; never heed me. It takes a deal of patience to go through the world." And so she left him.

He was not sorry to be alone a minute, and think. This short dialogue with Jael gave him some insight into female character. It made him suspect that he had been too timid with Grace Carden, and also that there were two women in the game instead of one.

When the time came to return he asked leave to borrow a horse-cloth.

He aired it by the fire, and remarked that it had turned very cold.

"Why," said Patty, "you have got your topcoat. Well, you are a soft one."

"And you are a sharp one," said Henry, ironically.

When Jael came to the gig, Henry put the cloth



over her shoulders. "'Twasn't for me, ye see," said he: "'twas for my betters."

"I like you for that," said Patty.

Then there was much kissing, and shaking of hands, and promising to come again, and away they drove to Hillsborough.

On the road Henry, for the first time, was very respectful, as well as kind, to Jael. She was soft and gentle, but rather silent and reserved. They parted at the door of "Woodbine Villa."

Next day, Henry called early, and found Miss Carden alone. His heart beat tumultuously. She was very gracious, and hoped he had spent a pleasant day, yesterday.

"Pretty well."

"Is that all? Why I quite envied you your ride, and your companion."

"She is a very good girl."

"She is something more than that: but one does not find her out all at once."

Now it was Henry's turn. But he was flustered, and thinking how he should begin. And, while he hesitated, the lady asked him was he come to finish the bust.

"No. I didn't come for that. I will finish it though." And thus he was diverted from his purpose, for the moment.

He took a carving tool, and eyed his model, but soon laid down the tool, and said: "I haven't thanked you yet. And I don't know how to thank you."

"What for?"

"For what you sent to Mr. Cheetham."

"Oh!" said Grace, and blushed. Then she turned



it off, and said she thought if anybody ought to thank her for that, it was Mr. Cheetham.

"Ay, for the order. But the sweet words that came with it? Do you think I don't prize them above all the orders in the world?"

She coloured high again. "What! did he show you my note?"

"He did: and that has made me his friend. Shall I tell you the effect of those words on me?"

"No; never mind. But I'm glad I put them in, if they did you any good."

"Any good? They made me a new man. I was defeated by the Trades: I was broken-hearted: and I hated everybody. Good Doctor Amboyne had set me work to do; to save the lives of my fellow-creatures. But I couldn't; I hated them so. The world had been too unjust to me, I could not return it good for evil. My heart was full of rage and bitterness."

"That's a great pity—at your age. But really it is no wonder. Yes; you have been cruelly used." And the water stood in Grace's eyes.

"Ay, but it is all over; those sweet words of yours made a man of me again. They showed me you cared a little for me. Now I have found a way to outwit the Trades. Now I'm on the road to fortune. I won't be a workman this time next year. I'll be a master, and a thriving one."

"Ay, do, do. Beat them, defeat them; make them scream with envy. But I am afraid you are too sanguine."

"No; I can do it, if you will only give me another word of hope to keep me going: and oh, I need it, if you knew all."



Grace began to look uneasy. "Mr. Little, can you doubt that you have my best wishes?" said she, guardedly, and much less warmly than she had spoken just before.

"No, I don't doubt that; but what I fear is, that when I have gained the hard battle, and risen in the world, it will be too late. Too late."

Grace turned more and more uncomfortable.

"Oh, pray wait a few months, and see what I can do, before you——"

Will it be believed that Mr. Carden, who seldom came into this room at all, must walk in, just at this moment, and interrupt them? He was too occupied with his own affairs, to pay much attention to their faces, or perhaps he might have asked himself why the young man was so pale, and his daughter so red.

"I heard you were here Little, and I want to speak to you on a matter of some importance."

Grace took this opportunity, and made her escape from the room promptly.

Henry, burning inwardly, had to listen politely to a matter he thought pitiably unimportant compared with that, which had been broken off. But the "Gosshawk" had got him in its clutches; and was resolved to make him a decoy duck. He was to open a new vein of Insurances. Workmen had, hitherto, acted with great folly and imprudence in this respect, and he was to cure them, by precept as well as example.

Henry assented, to gratify a person, whose goodwill he might require, and to get rid of a bore. But that was not so easy; the "Gosshawk" was full of this new project, and had a great deal to say, before he



came to the point, and offered Henry a percentage on the yearly premium of every workman, that should be insured in the "Gosshawk."

This little bargain struck, Henry was left alone; and waited for the return of Miss Carden.

He was simple enough to hope she would come back, and have it out with him.

She kept carefully out of his way, and, at last, he went sadly home.

"Ah," said he, "Jael gave me bad advice. I have been premature, and frightened her."

He would go to work his own way again.

In forty-eight hours he moved into his new house, furnished it partly: bought a quantity of mediocre wood-carving, and improved it; put specimens in his window, and painted his name over the door. This, at his mother's request and tearful entreaties, he painted out again, and substituted "Rowbotham."

Nor was Rowbotham a mere *nom de plume*. It was the real name of Silly Billy. The boy had some turn for carving, but was quite uncultivated: Henry took him into his employ, fed him, and made free with his name. With all this he found time to get a key made to fit the lock of Cairnhope old Church.

At one o'clock on Thursday morning he came to Cheetham's works, and scratched at the gate. A big workman opened it. It turned out to be Cheetham himself, in a moleskin suit, and a long beard.

The forge on wheels was all ready, also a cart containing anvil, bellows, hammers, pincers, leathern buckets, and a quantity of steel laths. They attached the forge to the tail of the cart, and went on their



silent expedition. Cheetham drove the cart. Henry followed afar off until they had cleared the suburbs.

They passed "Woodbine Villa." A single light was burning. Henry eyed it wistfully, and loitered long to look at it. Something told him that light was in her bedroom. He could hardly tear himself away from contemplating it: it was his pole-star.

There was only one great difficulty in their way; a man on a horse might cross the moor, but a cart must go by "Raby Hall" to reach the church: and, before they got within a furlong of the Hall, a watchdog began to bark.

"Stop, sir," whispered Henry. "I expected this." He then produced some pieces of thick felt, and tied them with strings round the wheels.

They then drove by the house as fast as they could. They did not deceive the dogs; but no man heard them, nor saw them.

They got to the church, opened the door, and drew the forge into the deserted building.

As soon as they got inside, Cheetham cast his eyes round and gave a shudder. "You must have a stout heart: no money should tempt me to work here by myself. Lord! What's that?"

For a low musical moan was heard.

Cheetham darted back, and got to the church-door.

Henry's heart beat faster: but he lighted his lantern, and went up the aisle. The place was solemn, grim, gaunt, and mouldering, and echoed strangely; but it was empty. He halloed to his companion that it was all right. Then they set the forge up near a pillar at the entrance into the chancel. When they



had done this, and brought in the steel laths, the sacks of coals, &c., Cheetham produced a flask, and took a pull of neat brandy. This gave him courage, and he proposed to have a look round before they went. Accordingly they inspected the building.

When they came round to the chancel, suddenly there was a rattle, and a tremendous rush of some huge thing that made a cold wind, and blew out the light.

Henry was appalled, and Cheetham dropped the lantern, and ran, yelling. And soon Henry heard his voice in the churchyard calling on him to come out.

He did go out, and felt very much puzzled and alarmed. However, he got matches from Cheetham, and went back, and lighted the lantern, quaking a little, and then he found that the great mouldering picture over the altar had rotted away from some of its supports, and one half of it was now drooping, like a monstrous wing, over the altar.

He returned with the lantern, and told Cheetham what it was. Then he screwed on the lock, locked the church, and they went back to Hillsborough in good spirits.

But, as he lay in bed, Henry thought the matter over, and, for the first time in his life, felt superstitious.

"It is very odd," he said, "that an old picture my forefathers have worshipped under, and prayed to no doubt, should flap out in my face, the moment I offered to set up my forge among their dead bones."

Daylight dispersed these superstitious feelings, and the battle began.

As usual, the first step towards making money, was



to part with it. He could do nothing without a horse and a light cart. In Hillsborough they drive magnificent horses in public cabs: Henry knew one in particular, that had often spun up the steepest hills with him; a brute of prodigious bone and spirit. He bought this animal for a moderate price, considering his value; and then the next thing was—and indeed with some of us it precedes the purchase of the animal—to learn to ride.

He had only two days to acquire this accomplishment in; so he took a compendious method. He went to the circus, at noon, and asked to see the clown. A gloomy fellow was fished out of the nearest public, and inquired what he wanted.

“The clown.”

“Well, I am the clown.”

“What! you the merry chap that makes the fun?” said Henry, incredulously.

“I make the fun at night,” replied the man dolefully. “If you want fun out of me, come and pay your shilling like a man.”

“But it isn’t fun I’ve come for. I want to learn to ride.”

“Then you are too old. Why, we begin as soon as we can stand on a horse’s back.”

“Oh, I don’t mean to ride standing. I want to sit a horse, rearing, or plunging, or blundering over rough ground.”

“What will you stand?”

“A sovereign.”

The clown dived into the public-house, and told a dark seedy man, with his black hair plastered and rolled effeminately, that he had got a bloke who would



stand a quid for a mount. The two came out, and the plastered Italian went to the stables: the melancholy punster conducted Henry into the arena, and stood beside him, like Patience on a monument. Presently a quiet mare ran in, and stuck.

Henry was mounted, and cantered her round, the two men instinctively following in a smaller circle, with jaws as long as your arm.

"This is delightful," said Henry; "but I might as well be sitting in a chair. What I want is a Prancer."

Then they brought him another horse, just as docile as the mare. The obedient creature, at a signal, reared suddenly, and seated Mr. Little on the sawdust behind him. A similar result was attained several times, by various means. But Henry showed himself so tough, courageous, and persistent, that he made great progress, and his good humour won his preceptors. They invited him to come to-morrow, at an earlier hour, and bring half a quid with him. He did so, and this time there was an American rider rehearsing, who showed Henry what to do, and what not to do; and gave him a most humorous and instructive lesson. Indeed, his imitations of bad riding were so truthful and funny, that even the clown was surprised into one laugh; he who rarely smiled, unless in the way of business.

"Well, sir," said Henry, "you have given me a good lesson; now take a hint from me; just you go and do all this before the public; for I never saw you do anything half as droll."

They all three shook their heads with one accord. Go out of the beaten track, before an audience? Never. Such vagaries were only admissible in private.



After this second day, the fee was reduced to a gallon of ale.

But, on the third day, the pupil combined theory with practice. He told his mother he was going to Cairnhope for the night. He then rode off to Cairnhope Church. He had two large saddle-bags, containing provisions, and tools of all sorts. He got safe across the moor just before sunset. He entered the church, let the horse in with him, and put him into the squire's pew. He then struck a light, went into the chancel, and looked at the picture. It was as he had left it; half on the wall, half drooping over the altar-place. The walls were dank, and streaked here and there with green. His footsteps echoed, and the edifice was all dark, except within the rays of his lantern; it also sang and moaned in a way to be accounted for by the action of the wind on a number of small apertures; but nevertheless, it was a most weird and ghostly sound. He was glad of the companionship of his very horse.

He took his buckets to the mountain stream, and, in due course, filled his trough, and left one bucket full for other uses. He then prepared and lighted his forge. As he plied the bellows, and the coals gleamed brighter and brighter, monumental figures came out and glared at him; mutilated inscriptions wavered on the walls; portions of the dark walls themselves gleamed in the full light, and showed the streaks and stains of age and weather, and the shadow of a gigantic horse's head; and, as the illuminated part seemed on fire by contrast, so the dark part of the church was horribly black and mysterious, and a place out of which a ghost



or a phantom might be expected, at any moment, to come forth into that brilliant patch of light.

Young Little, who had entered on this business in all the scepticism of the nineteenth century, felt awed, and began to wish he had selected any other building in the world but this. He seemed to be desecrating a tomb.

However, he mustered up his manly resolution. He looked up at a small aperture in the roof, and saw a star glittering above; it seemed close, and a type of that omniscient eye "from which no secrets are hid."

He clasped his hands together, and said, "I hope God, who has seen me driven from the haunts of men, will forgive me for taking refuge here; and, if he does, I don't care who else is offended, alive or dead." And, with this, he drew a white hot strip of steel from the forge on to the anvil, and down came his hammer with a blow, that sent the fiery steel flying all round, and rang and echoed through the desolate building. Instantly there was a tremendous plunge and clatter, followed by a shaking sound, and, whiz, the church was fanned by black wings going zigzag.

"Ten thousand devils!" yelled Henry, and heaved the hammer high, in his own defence.

But it was only the horse plunging and quivering with fear, and a score of bats the blow of the hammer had frightened out of the rotten pulpit.

He resumed work with a beating heart, and the building rang and echoed and re-echoed with the rapid blows; and no more interruption came. The nineteenth century conquered.

After four hours of earnest work, he fed his horse, ate a slice of bread and meat, drank water from the



bucket, gave his horse some, and went to sleep in the pew beside that useful animal.

Back to Hillsborough, at peep of day, with the blades he had forged.

He now took his mother, in a great measure, into his confidence, under a strict promise to tell nobody, not even Dr. Amboyne. Mrs. Little received the communication in a way that both surprised and encouraged him. She was as willing to outwit the Unions, as she was unwilling to resist them openly; and Henry found her an admirable coadjutor.

Had she known where Henry had set up his forge, she would have been very unhappy. But he merely told her it was in a secluded place, near Cairnhope, where he could never be detected.

The carving business, being merely a blind, was not pushed. But Henry gave his apprentice, Billy, instruction, and the youth began to show an aptitude, which contrasted remarkably with his general incapacity.

Mrs. Little paid one or two visits to factories, to see what women could do in this sort of work; and, one day, she told Henry she was sure she could sharpen and finish the blades.

"No, mother," said Henry. "You are a lady. I can't have you made a slave of, and your beautiful white hands spoiled."

"I shall be happier, helping you, dear; and I won't spoil my hands, since you care about them."

She insisted on a trial, and soon acquired a remarkable knack; she had a fine light hand: and it is an art easily learned by an attentive and careful



woman. Indeed they can beat the men at it, if they will only make up their minds.

And so the enterprise was launched, and conducted thus: in the daytime, Henry showed himself in the town, and talked big about carving; and, in the afternoon, he rode out, and did the real work of his life, over the dead bodies of his ancestors.

His saddle-bags were always full, and, gradually, he collected some comforts about him in the deserted church.

He called, more than once, at "Woodbine Villa," but Miss Carden was on a visit.

He was in the full career of fortune again, and, sanguine of success, before they met. One day, having ascertained from Jael, what day she would be at home, he called, and was admitted. The room was empty, but Miss Carden soon came into it, accompanied by Jael, carrying the bust.

"Ah, Mr. Little," said she, before he could possibly utter a word, "this is fortunate. There is a party here on Thursday, and I want to show the bust complete, if you don't mind."

Henry said he would finish it for her. He accordingly set to work, and waited quietly till Jael should leave the room, to have it out with Grace.

She, for her part, seemed to have forgotten his strange manner to her the other day; perhaps she chose to forget it, or overlook it. But Henry observed that Jael was not allowed to quit the room. Whatever Miss Carden wanted she fetched herself, and came back softly, and rather suddenly, as if she had a mind to surprise Jael and the other too. Female subtlety was clearly at work.



"What do you advise me?" said Henry to Jael, during one of these intervals.

Jael never lifted her eyes from her work, and spoke under her breath, "I think I'd be patient to-day. She must give you a chance to speak some day. Talk to me, when she comes back—about the Cairnhope folk, or anything."

Henry followed this advice, and Grace, for the first time, found herself a little ignored in the conversation. She was astonished at this, and I don't think she quite liked it.

Henry was still going on with warmth and volubility about the Cairnhope folk, their good hearts, and their superstitions, when a visitor was announced.

"Mr. Coventry."

Henry stopped in the middle of a sentence.

Grace brightened up, and said she was at home.

Mr. Coventry entered the room; a tall, well-made man, with an aquiline nose, and handsome face, only perhaps there were more lines in it than he was entitled to at his age, for he was barely thirty. He greeted Miss Carden with easy grace, and took no more notice of the other two, than if they were chairs and tables.

Mr. Frederick Coventry had studied the great art of pleasing, and had mastered it wonderfully; but he was not the man to waste it indiscriminately. He was there to please a young lady, to whom he was attached, not to diffuse his sunshine indiscriminately.

He courted her openly, not indelicately, but with a happy air of respect and self-assurance.

Henry sat, sick with jealousy, and tried to work and watch; but he could only watch: his hand trembled too much to work.



What may be called oblique flattery is very pleasing to those quick-witted girls, who have had a surfeit of direct compliments: and it is oblique flattery, when a man is supercilious and distant to others, as well as tender and a little obsequious to her he would please.

Grace Carden enjoyed this oblique flattery of Mr. Coventry's, all the more that it came to her just at a moment, when her companions seemed disposed to ignore her. She rewarded Mr. Coventry accordingly, and made Henry Little's heart die within him. His agony became intolerable. What a position was his! Set there, with a chisel in his hand, to copy the woman he loved, while another man wooed her before his face, and she smiled at his wooing.

At last his chisel fell out of his hand, and startled everybody: and then he rose up with pale cheek, and glittering eyes, and heaven only knows what he was going to do or say. But at that moment another visitor was announced, to whom indeed the door was never closed. He entered the next moment, and Grace ran to meet him, crying, "Oh, Mr. Raby! this is a surprise."

Mr. Raby kissed her, and shook hands with Mr. Coventry. He then said a kind word to Jael Dence, who got up and curtsied to him. He cast a careless glance on Henry and the bust, but said nothing. He was in a hurry, and soon came to the object of his visit.

"My dear," said he, "the last time I saw you, you said you were sorry that Christmas was no longer kept in Hillsborough as it used to be."

"And so I am."

"Well, it is kept in Cairnhope, thank heaven,



pretty much as it was three centuries ago. Your father will be in London, I hear; will you honour my place and me with a visit during the Christmas holidays?"

Grace opened her eyes with astonishment. "Oh, that I will," said she, warmly.

"You will take your chance of being snowed up?"

"I am afraid I shall not be so fortunate," was the charming reply.

The Squire turned to Coventry, and said slily, "I would ask you to join us, sir; but it is rather a dull place for a gentleman who keeps such good company."

"I never heard it spoken of as a dull place before," said the young man; "and, if it was, you have taken a sure means to make it attractive."

"That is true. Well, then, I have no scruple in asking you to join us;" and he gave Grace a look, as much as to say, "Am I not a considerate person?"

"I am infinitely obliged to you, Mr. Raby," said Coventry, seriously; "I will come."

"You will stay to luncheon, godpapa?"

"Never touch it. Good-by. Well, then, Christmas-eve I shall expect you both. Dinner at six. But come an hour or two before, if you can: and, Jael, my girl, you know you must dine at the Hall on Christmas-eve, and old Christmas-eve as usual, you and your sister and the old man."

Jael curtsied, and said with homely cordiality, "We shall be there, sir, please God we are alive."

"Bring your gun, Coventry. There's a good sprinkling of pheasants left. By-the-by, what about that pedigree of yours; does it prove the point?"

"Completely. Dorothy Raby, Sir Richard's youngest sister, married Thomas Coventry, who was out in the



forty-five. I'm having the pedigree copied for you, at a stationer's near."

"I should like to see it."

"I'll go with you, and show it to you, if you like."

Mr. Raby was evidently pleased at this attention, and they went off together.

Grace accompanied them to the door. On her return she was startled by the condition of young Little.

This sudden appearance of his uncle, whom he hated, had agitated him not a little, and that uncle's interference had blasted his last hope. He recognized this lover, and had sided with him: was going to shut the pair up, in a country-house, together. It was too much. He groaned, and sank back in his chair, almost fainting, and his hands began to shake in the air, as if he was in an ague.

Both the women darted simultaneously towards him. "Oh! he's fainting!" cried Grace. "Wine! wine! Fly." Jael ran out to fetch some, in spite of a despairing gesture, by which the young man tried to convey to her it was no use.

"Wine can do me no good, nor death no harm. Why did I ever enter this house?"

"Oh, Mr. Little, don't look so; don't talk so," said Grace, turning pale, in her turn. "Are you ill? What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. What should ail me? I'm only a workman. What business have I with a heart? I loved you dearly. I was working for you, fighting for you, thinking for you, living for you. And you love that Coventry, and never showed it."



Jael came in with a glass of wine for him, but he waved her off with all the grandeur of despair.

"You tell me this to my face!" said Grace, haughtily; but her bosom panted.

"Yes; I tell you so to your face. I love you, with all my soul."

"How dare you? What have I ever done, to justify——Oh, if you weren't so pale, I'd give you a lesson. What could possess you? It's not my fault, thank heaven. You have insulted me, sir. No; why should I? You must be unhappy enough. There, I'll say but one word, and that, of course, is 'good morning.'"

And she marched out of the room, trembling secretly in every limb.

Henry sat down, and hid his face, and all his frame shook.

Then Jael was all pity. She threw herself on her knees, and kissed his trembling hands with canine fidelity, and wept on his shoulder.

He took her hand, and tried hard to thank her, but the words were choked.

Grace Carden opened the door, and put her head cautiously in, for she wanted to say a word to Jael without attracting Henry's attention. But, when she saw Jael and Henry in so loving an attitude, she started, and then turned as red as fire; and presently burst out laughing.

Jael and Henry separated directly.

Grace laughed again, an unpleasant laugh. "I beg pardon, good people. I only wanted Mr. Little's address. I thought you could get it for me, Jael. And now I'm sure you can. Ha! ha! ha!"

And she was heard laughing after the door closed.



Now there was a world of contempt and insolence in this laugh. It conveyed, as plainly as words, "I was going to be so absurd, as to believe in your love, and pity it, at all events, though I can't approve it: but now you have just set my mind at ease. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Let me go," cried Henry, wildly.

"Nay, tell me your address."

"What for? To tell that cruel—laughing——"

"Nay then, for myself."

"That's a different thing. I respect you. But her, I mean to hate, as much as I loved her."

He gave Jael his address, and then got out of the house as fast as he could.

That evening Grace Carden surprised her father, by coming into his study. "Papa," said she, "I am come to ask a favour. You must not refuse me. But I don't know that you ever did. Dearest, I want 50%.

"Well, my child; just tell me what it is for."

"It is for Mr. Little; for his lessons."

"Well, but 50%!"

"He has given me a good many. And to tell you the truth, papa, I dismissed him rather unceremoniously; and now I should be glad to soften the blow a little, if I can. Do be very good and obedient, dear papa, and write what I shall dictate. *Please!*"

"Well, spoiled child: who can resist you?"

Then Grace dictated, and Mr. Carden wrote:—

"DEAR SIR,

"My daughter informs me that, as yet, you have received no remuneration for the lessons you have



given her. I beg your acceptance of the enclosed cheque, and, at the same time, should be glad if you would put a price on the admirable bust you have executed of her.

"Yours obediently,

"WALTER CARDEN."

The reply to this letter surprised Mr. Carden so, that he brought it to Grace, and showed it her.

"DEAR SIR,

"THE lessons are not worth speaking of. I have learnt more in your house than I taught. I beg to return the cheque with thanks. Price of the bust, five hundred guineas.

"Yours obediently,

"HENRY LITTLE."

Grace coloured up, and her eyes sparkled. "That young man wants humbling."

"I don't see that, really. He is very civil, and I presume this five hundred guineas is just a polite way of saying that he means to keep it. Wants it for an advertisement, eh?"

Grace smiled and bit her lip. "Oh, what a man of business you are!" And a little while after the tears came into her eyes. "Madman!" said she to herself. "He won't let me be his friend. Well, I can't help it."

After the brief excitement of this correspondence, Little soon relapsed into dull misery. His mother was alarmed, and could restrain herself no longer. She implored his confidence: "Make me the partner of



your grief, dear," she said; "not that you can tell me anything I have not guessed already; but, dearest, it will do you good to open your heart; and, who knows, I may assist you. I know my sex much better than you do."

Henry kissed her sadly, and said it was too late now. "It is all over. She is going to marry another man."

"Has she told you so?"

"Not in words; but I have seen it. She has burnt it into my heart."

"I wish I knew her," said Mrs. Little, very earnestly, and almost in a whisper.

"Some day, mother, some day; but not now. Oh, the tortures one heart can suffer, and yet not break."

Mrs. Little sighed. "What, not even tell me her name?"

"I can't, I can't. Oh, mother, you mean well, but you will drive me mad."

Mrs. Little forbore to press him farther just then. She sat silent at her work, and he at his, till they were aroused by a fly drawing up at the door.

A fine young woman got out, with something heavy, and holding it like a child on one arm, rapped at the door with the hand that was disengaged.

Mrs. Little opened the door to her, and she and Jael Dence surveyed each other with calm but searching eyes.

"If you please, ma'am, does Mr. Little bide here?"

Mrs. Little said yes, with a smile; for Jael's face and modesty pleased her at first sight.

"I have something for him."

"I'll give it to him."



"If you please, ma'am, I was to give it him myself."

Henry recognised the voice, opened the door of his room, and invited her in.

Mrs. Little followed her, full of suppressed curiosity. This put Jael out, but she was too patient to show it. "It is the bust," said she; and put it softly down on the table with her strong arms.

Henry groaned. "She despises even that; she flings it at my head without a word."

"Nay; I have got a note for you."

"Then why didn't you give it me at once?" cried Henry, impatiently.

She handed him the note without a word.

It ran thus:—

"Miss Carden presents her compliments to Mr. Little, and sends him his beautiful bust. She is grieved that he will accept no remuneration for his lessons; and begs permission to offer her best wishes for his happiness and prosperity."

The gentleness of this disarmed Henry, and at the same time the firmness crushed him. "It is all over!" he cried, despairingly: "and yet I can't hate her."

He ran from the room, unable to restrain his tears, and too proud and fiery to endure two spectators of his grief.

Mrs. Little felt, as mothers feel towards those who wound their young.

"Is it the woman's likeness?" said she bitterly, and then trembled with emotion.

"Ay."



"May I see it?"

"Surely, ma'am." And Jael began to undo the paper.

But Mrs. Little stopped her. "No, not yet. I couldn't bear the sight of a face that has brought misery upon him. I would rather look at yours. It is a very honest one. May I inquire your name?"

"Jael Dence—at your service."

"Dence! ah, then no wonder you have a good face: a Cairnhope face. My child, you remind me of days gone by. Come and see me again, will you? Then I shall be more able to talk to you quietly."

"Ay, that I will, ma'am." And Jael coloured all over with surprise, and such undisguised pleasure, that Mrs. Little kissed her, at parting.

She had been gone a considerable time, when Henry came back; he found his mother seated at the table, eyeing his masterpiece with stern and bitter scrutiny.

It was a picture, those two rare faces in such close opposition. The carved face seemed alive; but the living face seemed inspired, and to explore the other to the bottom with merciless severity. At such work the great female eye is almost terrible in its power.

"It is lovely," said she. "It seems noble. I cannot find what I know must be there. Oh, why does God give such a face as this to a fool?"

"Not a word against her," said Henry. "She is as wise, and as noble, and as good, as she is beautiful. She has but one fault; she loves another man. Put her sweet face away; hide it from me till I am an old man, and can bring it out to show young folks why I lived and will die a bachelor. Good-by, dear mother,



I must saddle Black Harry, and away to my night's work."

The days were very short now, and Henry spent two-thirds of his time in Cairnhope Church. The joyous stimulus of his labour was gone, but the habit remained, and carried him on in a sort of leaden way. Sometimes he wondered at himself for the hardships he underwent merely to make money, since money had no longer the same charm for him; but a good workman is a patient enduring creature, and self-indulgence, our habit, is, after all, his exception. Henry worked heavily on, with his sore, sad heart, as many a workman had done before him. Unfortunately his sleep began to be broken a good deal. I am not quite clear whether it was the after-clap of the explosion, or the prolonged agitation of his young heart, but at this time, instead of the profound sleep that generally rewards the sons of toil, he had fitful slumbers, and used to dream strange dreams, in that old church, so full of gaunt sights and strange sounds. And, generally speaking, however these dreams began, the figure of Grace Carden would steal in ere he awoke. His senses, being only half asleep, coloured his dreams: he heard her light footstep in the pattering rain, and her sweet voice in the musical moan of the desolate building; desolate as his heart when he awoke, and behold it was a dream.

The day after Christmas-day began brightly, but was dark and lowering towards afternoon. Mrs. Little advised Henry to stay at home. But he shook his head. "How could I get through the night? Work is my salvation. But for my forge, I should perhaps



end like ——” he was going to say “my poor father.” But he had the sense to stop.

Unable to keep him at home, the tender mother got to his saddle-bags, and filled his flask with brandy, and packed up a huge piece of Yorkshire pie, and even stuffed in a plaid shawl. And she strained her anxious eyes after him as he rode off.

When he got among the hills, he found it was snowing there very hard; and then, somehow, notwithstanding all the speed he made, it was nearly dark when he got on the moor, and the tracks he used to go by, over the dangerous ground, were effaced.

He went a snail's pace, and, at last, dismounted, and groped his way. He got more than one fall in the snow, and thought himself very fortunate when, at last, something black towered before him, and it was the old church.

The scene was truly dismal: the church was already overburdened with snow, and still the huge flakes fell fast and silently, and the little mountain stream, now swollen to a broad and foaming torrent, went roaring by, behind the churchyard wall.

Henry shivered, and made for the shelter.

The horse, to whom this church was merely a well-ventilated stable, went in and clattered up the aisle, saddle-bags and all.

Henry locked the door inside, and soon blew the coals to a white heat. The bellows seemed to pant unnaturally loud, all was so deadly still.

The windows were curtained with snow, that increased the general gloom, though some of the layers shone ghostly white and crystalline, in the light of



the forge, and of two little grates he had set in a monument.

Two heaps of snow lay in the centre aisle, just under two open places in the roof, and, on these, flakes, as big as a pennypiece, kept falling through the air, and glittered like diamonds as they passed through the weird light of the white coals.

Oh! it was an appalling place, that night; youth and life seemed intruders. Henry found it more than he could bear. He took a couple of candles, placed them in bottles, and carried them to the western window, and there lighted them. This one window was protected by the remains of iron-work outside, and the whole figure of one female saint in coloured glass survived.

This expedient broke the devilish blackness, and the saint shone out glorious.

The horrid spell thus broken in some degree, Henry plied his hammer, and made the church ring, and the flaming metal fly.

But by-and-by, as often happened to him now, a drowsiness overcame him at the wrong time. In vain he battled against it. It conquered him even as he worked; and, at last, he leaned with his arms against the handle of the bellows, and dozed as he stood.

He had a dream of that kind which we call a vision, because the dream seems to come to the dreamer where he is.

He dreamed he was there at his forge, and a soft voice called to him. He turned, and lo! between him and the western window stood six female figures, all dressed in beautiful dresses, but of another age, and of many colours, yet transparent; and their faces fair,



but white as snow: and the ladies curtsied to him, with a certain respectful majesty beyond description: and somehow, by their faces, and their way of curtseying to him, he knew they were women of his own race, and themselves aware of the relationship.

Then several more such figures came rustling softly through the wall from the churchyard, and others rose from the vaults and took their places quietly, till there was an avenue of dead beauties; and they stood in an ascending line up to the west window. Some stood on the ground, some on the air; that made no difference to them.

Another moment, and then a figure more lovely than them all shone in the window, at the end of that vista of fair white faces.

It was Grace Carden. She smiled on him and said, "I am going where I can love you. There the world cannot divide us. Follow me; follow; follow!"

Then she melted away; then all melted: and he awoke with a loud cry that echoed through the edifice, now dark and cold as the grave; and a great white owl went whirling, and with his wings made the only air that stirred.

The fire was out, and the place a grave. Yet, cold as it was, the dreamer was bathed in perspiration, so clear had been that unearthly vision, so ghostly was now that flitting owl.

Shuddering all over he lighted his fire again, and plied his bellows with fury, till the fire glowed brighter than ever; and even then he prayed aloud that he might never see the like again, even in a dream.

He worked like mad, and his hand trembled as he struck.



Ere he had thoroughly recovered the shock, a wild cry arose outside.

He started back, awe-struck.

What with the time, the place, and that strange vision, the boundaries of the natural and the supernatural were a little confused in his mind.

"Help, help!" cried a voice; and now the familiar tone of that voice made him utter a loud cry in return.

He searched for the key, and made his way to the door: but, just as he began to insert the key, the voice was at the door outside.

"Oh, save me! A dying girl! Save me!"

The cry was now a moan, and the next moment an inert mass fell like lead against the door in a vain attempt to knock at it.

The voice was Grace Carden's, and it was Grace Carden's body that fell so inert and powerless against the church-door, within a yard of Henry Little's hand.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON the twenty-fourth of December Miss Carden and Jael Dence drove to Cairnhope village, and stopped at the farm: but Nathan and his eldest daughter had already gone up to the Hall; so they waited there but a minute or two to light the carriage lamps, and then went on up the hill. It was pitch dark when they reached the house. Inside, one of Mr. Raby's servants was on the look-out for the sound of wheels, and the visitors had no need to knock or ring; this was a point of honour with the master of the mansion; when he did invite people, the house opened its arms; even



as they drove up, open flew the great hall-door, and an enormous fire inside blazed in their faces, and shot its flame beyond them out into the night.

Grace alighted, and was about to enter the house, when Jael stopped her, and said, "Oh, Miss, you will be going in left foot foremost. Pray don't do that: it is so unlucky."

Grace laughed, but changed her foot, and entered a lofty hall, hung with helmets, pikes, breast-plates, bows, cross-bows, antlers, etc. etc. Opposite her was the ancient chimney-piece and ingle-nook, with no grate, but two huge iron dogs, set five feet apart; and on them lay a birch log and root, the size of a man, with a dozen beech billets burning briskly and crackling underneath and aside it. This genial furnace warmed the staircase and passages, and cast a fiery glow out on the carriage, and glorified the steel helmets and breast-plates of the dead Rabies on the walls, and the sparkling eyes of the two beautiful women who now stood opposite it in the pride of their youth, and were warmed to the heart by its crackle and glow. "Oh! what a glorious fire, this bitter night. Why, I never saw such a——"

"It is the Yule log, Miss. Ay, and you might go all round England, and not find its fellow, I trow. But our Squire he don't go to the chandler's shop for his yule log, but to his own woods, and fells a great tree."

A housemaid now came forward with bed-candles, to show Miss Carden to her room. Grace was going up, as a matter of course, when Jael, busy helping the footman with her boxes, called after her: "The stocking, Miss! the stocking!"



Grace looked down at her feet in surprise.

"There it is, hung up by the door. We must put our presents into it before we go upstairs."

"Must we? what on earth am I to give?"

"Oh, anything will do. See, I shall put in this crooked sixpence."

Grace examined her purse, and complained that her stupid sixpences were all straight.

"Never mind, Miss; put in a hair-pin, sooner than pass the stocking o' Christmas-eve."

Grace had come prepared to encounter old customs. She offered her shawl-pin: and Jael, who had modestly inserted her own gift, pinned Grace's offering on the outside of the stocking with a flush of pride. Then they went upstairs with the servant, and Grace was ushered into a bedroom of vast size, with two fires burning at each end; each fireplace was flanked with a coal-scuttle full of kennel coal in large lumps, and also with an enormous basket of beech billets. She admired the old-fashioned furniture, and said, "Oh, what a palace of a bedroom! This will spoil me for my little poky room. Here one can roam about and have great thoughts. Hillsborough, good-by! I end my days in the country."

Presently her quick ear caught the rattle of swift wheels upon the hard road: she ran to the window, and peeped behind the curtain. Two brilliant lamps were in sight, and drew nearer and nearer, like great goggling eyes, and soon a neat dogcart came up to the door. Before it had well stopped, the hospitable door flew open, and the yule fire shone on Mr. Coventry, and his natty groom, and his dogcart with plated axles; it illumined the silver harness, and the



roan horse himself, and the breath, that poured into the keen air from his nostrils red inside.

Mr. Coventry dropped from his shoulders, with easy grace, something between a coat and a cloak, lined throughout with foxes' skins; and, alighting, left his groom to do the rest. The fur was reddish, relieved with occasional white; and Grace gloated over it, as it lay glowing in the fire-light. "Ah!" said she, "I should never do for a poor man's wife: I'm so fond of soft furs and things, and I don't like poky rooms." With that she fell into a reverie, which was only interrupted by the arrival of Jael and her boxes.

Jael helped her unpack, and dress. There was no lack of conversation between these two; but most of it turned upon nothings. One topic, that might have been interesting to the readers of this tale, was avoided by them both. They had now come to a very high opinion of each other's penetration, and it made them rather timid and reserved on that subject.

Grace was dressed, and just going down, when she found she wanted a pin. She asked Jael for one.

Jael looked aghast. "Oh, Miss, I'd rather you would take one, in spite of me."

"Well, so I will. There!" And she whipped one away from the bosom of Jael's dress.

"Mind I never gave it you."

"No. I took it by brute force."

"I like you too well to give you a pin."

"May I venture to inquire what would be the consequence?"

"Ill luck, you may be sure. Heart trouble they do say."

"Well, I'm glad to escape that so easily. Why,



this is the temple of superstition, and you are the High Priestess. How shall I ever get on at dinner, without you? I know I shall do something to shock Mr. Raby. Perhaps spill the very salt. I generally do."

"Ay, Miss, at home. But, dear heart, you won't see any of them nasty little salt-cellars here, that some crazy creature have invented to bring down bad luck. You won't spill the salt here, no fear: but don't ye let anybody help you to it neither. If he helps you to salt, he helps you to sorrow."

"Oh, does he? Then it is fortunate nobody ever does help anybody to salt. Well, yours is a nice creed; why, we are all at the mercy of other people, according to you. Say I have a rival: she smiles in my face, and says, 'My sweet friend, accept this tribute of my esteem;' and gives me a pinch of salt, before I know where I am. I wither on the spot; and she sails off with the prize. Or, if there is no salt about, she comes behind me with a pin, and pins it to my skirt, and that pierces my heart. Don't you see what abominable nonsense it all is?"

The argument was cut short by the ringing of a tremendous bell. Grace gave the last, swift, searching, all-comprehensive look of her sex, into the glass, and went down to the drawing-room. There she found Mr. Raby, and Mr. Coventry, who both greeted her cordially; and the next moment dinner was announced.

"Raby Hall" was a square house, with two large low wings. The left wing contained the kitchen, pantry, scullery, bakehouse, brewhouse, &c.; the servants' bedrooms above. The right wing the stables, coachhouses, cattle-sheds, and several bedrooms. The main building the hall, the best bedrooms, and the double staircase,



leading up to them in horseshoe form from the hall: and, behind the hall, on the ground-floor, there was a morning-room, in which several of the Squire's small tenants were even now preparing for supper by drinking tea, and eating cakes made in rude imitation of the infant Saviour. On the right of the hall were the two drawing-rooms en suite, and on the left was the remarkable room, into which the host now handed Miss Carden, and Mr. Coventry followed. This room had been, originally, the banqueting-hall. It was about twenty feet high, twenty-eight feet wide, and fifty feet long, and ended in an enormous bay window, that opened upon the lawn. It was entirely panelled with oak, carved by old Flemish workmen, and adorned here and there with bold devices. The oak, having grown old in a pure atmosphere, and in a district where wood and roots were generally burned in dining-rooms, had acquired a very rich and beautiful colour, a pure and healthy reddish brown, with no tinge whatever of black: a mighty different hue from any you can find in Wardour Street. Plaster ceiling there was none, and never had been. The original joists, and beams, and boards, were still there, only not quite so rudely fashioned as of old; for Mr. Raby's grandfather had caused them to be planed and varnished, and gilded a little in serpentine lines. This wood-work above gave nobility to the room, and its gilding, though worn, relieved the eye agreeably.

The farther end was used as a study, and one side of it graced with books, all handsomely bound: the other side, with a very beautiful organ that had an oval mirror in the midst of its gilt dummy pipes. All this made a cosy nook in the grand room.



What might be called the dining-room part, though rich, was rather sombre, on ordinary occasions; but this night it was decorated gloriously. The materials were simple—wax-candles and holly; the effect was produced by a magnificent use of these materials. There were eighty candles, of the largest size sold in shops, and twelve wax pillars, five feet high, and the size of a man's calf; of these, four only were lighted at present. The holly was not in sprigs, but in enormous branches, that filled the eye with glistening green and red: and in the embrasure of the front window stood a young holly-tree, entire, eighteen feet high, and gorgeous with five hundred branches of red berries. The tree had been dug up, and planted here in an enormous bucket, used for that purpose, and filled with mould.

Close behind this tree were placed two of the wax pillars, lighted, and their flame shone through the leaves and berries magically.

As Miss Carden entered, on Mr. Raby's arm, her eye swept the room with complacency, and settled on the holly-tree. At sight of that, she pinched Mr. Raby's arm, and cried "Oh!" three times. Then, ignoring the dinner-table altogether, she pulled her host away to the tree, and stood before it, with clasped hands. "Oh, how beautiful!"

Mr. Raby was gratified. "So then our forefathers were not quite such fools as some people say."

"They were angels, they were ducks. It is beautiful, it is divine."

Mr. Raby looked at the glowing cheek, and deep, sparkling, sapphire eye. "Come," said he; "after all



there's nothing here so beautiful as the young lady, who now honours the place with her presence."

With this he handed her ceremoniously to a place at his right hand; said a short grace, and sat down between his two guests.

"But, Mr. Raby," said Grace, ruefully, "I'm with my back to the holly-tree."

"You can ask Coventry to change places."

Mr. Coventry rose, and the change was effected.

"Well, it is your doing, Coventry. Now she'll overlook *you*."

"All the better for me, perhaps. I'm content: Miss Carden will look at the holly, and I shall look at Miss Carden."

"Faute de mieux."

"C'est méchant."

"And I shall fine you both a bumper of champagne, for going out of the English language."

"I shall take my punishment like a man."

"Then take mine as well. Champagne with me means frenzy."

But, in the midst of the easy banter and jocose airy nothings of the modern dining-room, an object attracted Grace's eye. It was a picture, with its face turned to the wall, and some large letters on the back of the canvas.

This excited Grace's curiosity directly, and, whenever she could without being observed, she peeped, and tried to read the inscription; but, what with Mr. Raby's head, and a monster candle that stood before it, she could not decipher it unobserved. She was inclined to ask Mr. Raby; but she was very quick, and, observing that the other portraits were of his family, she suspected



at once that the original of this picture had offended her host, and that it would be in bad taste, and might be offensive, to question him. Still the subject took possession of her.

At about eight o'clock a servant announced candles in the drawing-room.

Upon this Mr. Raby rose, and, without giving her any option on the matter, handed her to the door with obsolete deference.

In the drawing-room she found a harpsichord, a spinet, and a piano, all tuned expressly for her. This amused her, as she had never seen either of the two older instruments in her life. She played on them all three.

Mr. Raby had the doors thrown open to hear her.

She played some pretty little things from Mendelssohn, Spohr, and Schubert.

The gentlemen smoked and praised.

Then she found an old music-book, and played Handel's overture to *Otho*, and the minuet.

The gentlemen left off praising directly, and came silently into the room to hear the immortal melodist. But this is the rule in Music; the lips praise the delicate gelatinous, the heart beats in silence at the mighty melodious.

Tea and coffee came directly afterwards, and, ere they were disposed of, a servant announced "The Wassailers."

"Well, let them come in," said Mr. Raby.

The school-children and young people of the village trooped in, and made their obeisances, and sang the Christmas Carol,—

God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay.



Then one of the party produced an image of the Virgin and Child, and another offered comfits in a box; a third presented the wassail-cup, into which Raby immediately poured some silver, and Coventry followed his example. Grace fumbled for her purse, and, when she had found it, began to fumble in it for her silver.

But Raby lost all patience, and said, "There, I give this for the lady, and she'll pay me *next Christmas*."

The wassailers departed, and the Squire went to say a kind word to his humbler guests.

Miss Carden took that opportunity to ask Mr. Coventry if he had noticed the picture with its face to the wall. He said he had.

"Do you know who it is?"

"No idea."

"Did you read the inscription?"

"No. But, if you are curious, I'll go back to the dining-room, and read it."

"I'm afraid he might be angry. There is no excuse for going there now."

"Send me for your pocket-handkerchief."

"Please see whether I have left my pocket-handkerchief in the dining-room, Mr. Coventry," said Grace, demurely.

Mr. Coventry smiled, and hurried away. But he soon came back to say that the candles were all out, the windows open, and the servants laying the cloth for supper.

"Oh, never mind, then," said Grace; "when we go in to supper I'll look myself."

But a considerable time elapsed before supper, and



Mr. Coventry spent this time in making love rather ardently, and Grace in defending herself rather feebly.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Mr. Raby rejoined them, and they all went in to supper. There were candles lighted on the table, and a few here and there upon the walls; but the room was very sombre: and Mr. Raby informed them this was to remind them of the moral darkness, in which the world lay before that great event they were about to celebrate.

He then helped each of them to a ladleful of frumety, remarking at the same time, with a grim smile, that they were not obliged to eat it; there would be a very different supper after midnight.

Then a black-letter Bible was brought him, and he read it all to himself at a side-table.

After an interval of silence so passed, there was a gentle tap at the bay window. Mr. Raby went and threw it open, and immediately a woman's voice, full, clear and ringing, sang outside:—

The first Noel the angels did say,  
Was to three poor shepherds, in fields as they lay;  
In fields where they were keeping their sheep,  
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

*Chorus.* Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

The chorus also was sung outside.

During the chorus one of the doors opened, and Jael Dence came in by it; and the treble singer, who was the blacksmith's sister, came in at the window, and so the two women met in the room, and sang the second verse in sweetest harmony. These two did not sing like invalids, as their more refined sisters too often do; from their broad chests, and healthy lungs, and noble throats, and, above all, their musical hearts,



they poured out the harmony so clear and full, that every glass in the room rang like a harp, and a bolt of ice seemed to shoot down Grace Carden's backbone; and, in the chorus, gentle George's bass was like a diapason.

They looked up and saw a star  
That shone in the East beyond them far.  
And unto the earth it gave a great light,  
And so it continued both day and night.

*Chorus.* Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,  
Born is the King of Israel.

As the Noel proceeded, some came in at the window, others at the doors, and the lower part of the room began to fill with singers and auditors.

The Noel ended; there was a silence, during which the organ was opened, the bellows blown, and a number of servants and others came into the room with little lighted tapers, and stood, in a long row, awaiting a signal from the Squire.

He took out his watch, and, finding it was close on twelve o'clock, directed the doors to be flung open, that he might hear the great clock in the hall strike the quarters.

There was a solemn hush of expectation, that made the sensitive heart of Grace Carden thrill with anticipation.

The clock struck the first quarter—dead silence; the second—the third—dead silence.

But, at the fourth, and with the first stroke of midnight, out burst the full organ and fifty voices, with the "Gloria in excelsis Deo:" and, as that divine hymn surged on, the lighters ran along the walls and lighted the eighty candles, and, for the first time, the



twelve waxen pillars, so that, as the hymn concluded, the room was in a blaze, and it was Christmas Day.

Instantly an enormous punch-bowl was brought to the host. He put his lips to it, and said, "Friends, neighbours, I wish you all a merry Christmas." Then there was a cheer that made the whole house echo; and, by this time, the tears were running down Grace Carden's cheeks.

She turned aside to hide her pious emotion, and found herself right opposite the picture, with this inscription, large and plain, in the blaze of light,—

"GONE INTO TRADE."

If, in the middle of the pious harmony, that had stirred her soul, some blaring trumpet had played a polka, in another key, it could hardly have jarred more upon her devotional frame, than did this earthy line, that glared out between two gigantic Yule candles, just lighted in honour of Him, whose mother was in trade when he was born.

She turned from it with deep repugnance, and seated herself in silence at the table.

Very early in the supper she made an excuse, and retired to her room: and, as she went out, her last glance was at the mysterious picture.

She saw it again next morning at breakfast-time; but, it must be owned, with different eyes. It was no longer contrasted with a religious ceremony, and with the sentiments of gratitude and humility proper to that great occasion, when we commemorate His birth, whose mother had gone into trade. The world, and society, whose child she was, seemed now to speak with authority from the canvas, and to warn her how



vain and hopeless were certain regrets, which lay secretly, I might say clandestinely, at her heart.

She revered her godfather, and it was no small nor irrelevant discovery to find that he had actually turned a picture in disgrace to the wall, because its owner had descended to the level, or probably not quite to the level, of Henry Little.

Jael Dence came up from the farm on Christmas afternoon, and almost the first word Grace spoke was to ask her if she knew whose picture that was in the dining-room. This vague description was enough for Jael. She said she could not tell for certain, but she had once heard her father say it was the Squire's own sister; but, when she had pressed him on the subject, the old man had rebuked her—told her not to meddle too much with other folks' business. "And to be sure, Squire has his reasons, no doubt," said Jael, rather drily.

"The reason that is written on the back?"

"Ay: and a very poor reason too, to my mind."

"You are not the best judge of that—excuse me for saying so. Oh dear, I wish I could see it."

"Don't think of such a thing, Miss. You can't, however, for it's padlocked down that way you could never loose it without being found out. No longer ago than last Yule-time 'twas only turned, and not fastened. But they say in the kitchen, that one day last month Squire had them all up, and said the picture had been tampered with while he was at Hillsboro'; and he scolded, and had it strapped and padlocked down as 'tis."

The reader can imagine the effect of these fresh revelations. And a lover was at hand, of good birth,



good manners, and approved by her godfather. That lover saw her inclining towards him, and omitted nothing to compliment and please her. To be sure, that was no uphill work, for he loved her better than he had ever loved a woman in his life, which was a good deal to say, in his case.

They spent Christmas-day very happily together. Church in the morning; then luncheon; then thick boots, a warmer shawl, and a little walk all together; for Mr. Raby took a middle course; since no positive engagement existed, he would not allow his fair guest to go about with Mr. Coventry alone, and so be compromised, even in village eyes; but, on the other hand, by stopping now and then to give an order, or exchange a word, he gave Coventry many opportunities, and that gentleman availed himself of them with his usual tact.

In the evening they sat round the great fire, and Mr. Raby mulled and spiced red wine by a family receipt, in a large silver saucepan; and they sipped the hot and generous beverage, and told stories and legends, the custom of the house on Christmas-night. Mr. Raby was an inexhaustible repertory of ghost stories and popular legends. But I select one that was told by Mr. Coventry, and told with a certain easy grace that gave it no little interest.

#### MR. COVENTRY'S TALE.

“When I was quite a child, there was a very old woman living in our village, that used to frighten me with her goggle eyes, and muttering. She passed for a witch, I think; and when she died—I was eight years old then—old people put their heads together,



and told strange stories about her early life. It seems that this Molly Slater was away in service at Bollington, a village halfway between our place and Hillsborough, and her fellow-servants used to quiz her because she had no sweetheart. At last, she told them to wait till next Hillsboro' fair, and they should see. And, just before the fair, she reminded them of their sneers, and said she should not come home without a sweetheart, though she took the Evil One himself. For all that, she did leave the fair alone. But, as she trudged home in the dark, a man overtook her, and made acquaintance with her. He was a pleasant fellow, and told her his name was William Easton. Of course she could not see his face very well, but he had a wonderfully sweet voice. After that night, he used to court her, and sing to her, but always in the dark. He never would face a candle, though he was challenged to more than once. One night there was a terrible noise heard—it is described as if a number of men were threshing out corn upon the roof—and Molly Slater was found wedged in between the bed and the wall, in a place where there was scarcely room to put your hand. Several strong men tried to extricate her by force; but both the bed and the woman's body resisted so strangely that, at last, they thought it best to send for the parson. He was a great scholar, and himself under some suspicion of knowing more than it would be good for any less pious person to know. Well, the parson came, and took a candle that was burning, and held it to the place where poor Molly was imprisoned, and moaning; and they say he turned pale, and shivered, for all his learning. I forget what he said or did next; but by-



and-by there was a colloquy in a whisper between him and some person unseen; and they say that this unseen whisper was very sweet, and something like the chords of a harp, only low and very articulate. The parson whispered, 'God gives a sinner time.' The sweet voice answered, 'He can afford to; he is the stronger.' Then the parson adjured the unseen one to wait a year and a day. But he refused, still in the gentlest voice. Then the parson said these words: 'By all we love and fear, by all you fear and hate, I adjure you to loose her, or wait till next Christmas-eve.'

"I suppose the Evil Spirit saw some trap in that proposal, for he is said to have laughed most musically. He answered, 'By all I fear and hate, I'll loose her never; but, but I'll wait for her—till the candle's burnt out;' and he chuckled most musically again.

"Then wait to all eternity,' the parson roared; and blew the candle out directly, and held it, with his hands crossed over it."

Grace Carden's eyes sparkled in the firelight. "Go on," she cried, excitedly.

"The girl was loosed easily enough after that; but she was found to be in a swoon; and not the least bruised, though ten villagers had been pulling at her one after another."

"And what became of her afterwards?"

"She lived to be ninety-six, and died in my time. I think she had money left her. But she never married; and, when she was old, she wandered about the lanes, muttering, and frightening little boys, myself among the number. But now my little story follows another actor of the tale."



"Oh, I'm so glad it is not over."

"No. The parson took the candle away, and it was never seen again. But, somehow, it got wind that he had built it into the wall of the church; perhaps he didn't say so, but was only understood to say so. However, people used to look round the church for the place. And now comes the most remarkable thing of all; three years ago the present rector repaired the floor of the chancel, intending to put down encaustic tiles. Much to his surprise, the workmen found plenty of old encaustic tiles: they had been interred as rubbish at some period, when antiquity and beauty were less respected than they are now, I suppose."

Mr. Raby broke in, "The Puritans. Barbarians! beasts! It was just like them. Well, sir——?"

"When the rector found that, he excavated more than was absolutely necessary for his purpose, and the deeper he went, the more encaustic tiles. In one place they got down to the foundation, and they found an oak chest fast in the rock,—a sort of channel had been cut in the rock for this chest, or rather box (for it was only about eighteen inches long), to lie in. The master mason was there luckily, and would not move it till the rector had seen it. He was sent for, but half the parish was there before him; and he tells me there were three theories firmly established, and proved, before he could finish his breakfast and get to the spot. Theory of Wilder the village grocer: 'It is treasure hidden by them there sly old monks.' Mr. Wilder is a miser, and is known to lay up money. He is, I believe, the only man left in the North country who can show you a hundred spade guineas."



Mr. Raby replied, energetically, "I respect him, Wilder for ever. What was the next theory?"

"The skeleton of a child. I forget who propounded this; but I believe it carried the majority. But the old sexton gave it a blow. 'Nay, nay,' said he; 'them's the notions of strangers. I was born here, and my father afore me. It will be Molly Slater's candle, and nought else.' Then poor Molly's whole story came up again over the suspected box. But I am very tedious."

"Tedious! You are delightful, and thrilling, and pray go on. The rector had the box opened?"

"On the spot."

"Well!"

"The box went to pieces, in spite of all their care. But there was no doubt as to its contents."

Grace exclaimed, enthusiastically, "A candle. Oh, do say a candle!"

Mr. Coventry responded, "It's awfully tempting; but I suspect the traditional part of my story is *slightly embellished*: so the historical part must be accurate. What the box did really contain, to my knowledge, was a rush-wick, much thicker than they are made now-a-days; and this rush-wick was impregnated with grease, and even lightly coated with a sort of brown wafer-like paste. The rector thinks it was a combination of fine dust from the box with the original grease. He shall show it you, if you are curious to see it."

"Of course we are curious. Oh, Mr. Raby, what a strange story. And how well he told it."

"Admirably. We must drink his health."

"I'll wish it him instead, because I require all my reason just now to understand his story. And I don't



understand it, after all. There; you found the candle, and so it is all true. But what does the rector think?"

"Well, he says there is no connection whatever between the rush-wick and——"

"Don't tell her what *he* says," cried Raby, with a sudden fury that made Grace start and open her eyes. "I know the puppy. He is what is called a divine now-a-days; but used to be called a sceptic. There never was so infidel an age. Socinus was content to prove Jesus Christ a man; but Renan has gone and proved him a Frenchman. Nothing is so gullible as an unbeliever. The right reverend father in God, Cocker, has gnawed away the Old Testament; the Oxford doctors are nibbling away the New: nothing escapes but the Apocrypha: yet these same sceptics believe the impudent lies, and monstrous arithmetic, of geology, which babbles about a million years, a period actually beyond the comprehension of the human intellect; and takes up a jawbone, that some sly navy has transplanted overnight from the churchyard into Lord knows what stratum, fees the navy, gloats over the bone, and knocks the Bible down with it. No, Mr. Coventry, your story is a good one, and well told; don't let us defile it with the comments of a sceptical credulous pedant. Fill your glass, sir. Here's to old religion, old stories, old songs, old houses, old wine, old friends, or" (recovering himself with admirable grace) "to new friends that are to be old ones ere we die. Come, let the stronger vessel drink, and the weaker vessel sip, and all say together, after me,—

Well may we all be,  
Ill may we never see,  
That make good company  
Beneath the roof of Raby."



When this rude rhyme had been repeated in chorus, there was a little silence, and the conversation took a somewhat deeper tone. It began through Grace asking Mr. Raby, with all the simplicity of youth, whether he had ever seen anything supernatural with his own eyes. "For instance," said she, "this deserted church of yours, that you say the shepherd said he saw on fire—did *you* see that?"

"Not I. Indeed, the church is not in sight from here. No, Grace, I never saw anything supernatural: and I am sorry for it, for I laugh at people's notion that a dead man has any power to injure the living; how can a cold wind come from a disembodied spirit? I am all that a ghost is, and something more; and I only wish I *could* call the dead from their graves; I'd soon have a dozen gentlemen and ladies out of that old churchyard into this very room. And, if they would only come, you would see me converse with them as civilly and as calmly as I am doing with you. The fact is, I have some questions to put, which only the dead can answer—passages in the family correspondence, referring to things I can't make out for the life of me."

"Oh, Mr. Raby, pray don't talk in this dreadful way, for fear they should be angry and come." And Grace looked fearfully round over her shoulder.

Mr. Raby shook his head; and there was a dead silence.

Mr. Raby broke it rather unexpectedly. "But," said he, gravely, "if I have seen nothing, I've heard something. Whether it was supernatural, I can't say; but, at least, it was unaccountable and terrible. I have heard THE GABRIEL HOUNDS."



Mr. Coventry and Grace looked at one another, and then inquired, almost in a breath, what the Gabriel hounds were.

"A strange thing in the air that is said, in these parts, to foretell calamity."

"Oh dear!" said Grace, "this is thrilling again; pray tell us."

"Well, one night I was at Hillsborough on business, and as I walked by the old parish church, a great pack of beagles, in full cry, passed close over my head."

"Oh!"

"Yes; they startled me, as I never was startled in my life before. I had never heard of the Gabriel hounds then, and I was stupefied. I think I leaned against the wall there full five minutes, before I recovered myself, and went on."

"Oh dear! But did anything come of it?"

"You shall judge for yourself. I had left a certain house about an hour and a half: there was trouble in that house, but only of a pecuniary kind. To tell the truth, I came back with some money for them, or rather, I should say, with the promise of it. I found the wife in a swoon: and, upstairs, her husband lay dead by his own hand."

"Oh, my poor godpapa!" cried Grace, flinging her arm tenderly round his neck.

"Ay, my child, and the trouble did not end there. Insult followed; ingratitude; and a family feud, which is not healed yet, and never will be—till she and her brat come on their knees to me."

Mr. Raby had no sooner uttered these last words with great heat, than he was angry with himself.



"Ah!" said he, "the older a man gets, the weaker. To think of my mentioning that to you young people!" And he rose and walked about the room in considerable agitation and vexation. "Curse the Gabriel hounds! It is the first time I have spoken of them since that awful night; it is the last time I ever will speak of them. What they are, God, who made them, knows. Only I pray I may never hear them again, nor any friend of mine."

Next morning Jael Dence came up to the Hall, and almost the first question Grace asked her was, whether she had ever heard of the Gabriel hounds.

Jael looked rather puzzled. Grace described them after Mr. Raby.

"Why, that will be Gabble Retchet," said Jael. "I wouldn't talk much about the like, if I was you, Miss."

But Grace persisted, and, at last, extracted from her that sounds had repeatedly been heard in the air at night, as of a pack of hounds in full cry, and that these hounds ran before Trouble. "But," said Jael, solemnly, "they are not hounds at all; they are the souls of unbaptized children, wandering in the air till the day of judgment."

This description, however probable, had the effect of making Grace disbelieve the phenomenon altogether, and she showed her incredulity by humming a little air.

But Jael soon stopped that. "Oh, Miss, pray don't do so. If you sing before breakfast, you'll cry before supper."

At breakfast, Mr. Coventry invited Miss Carden to go to the top of Cairnhope Peak, and look over



four counties. He also told her she could see Bollinghope House, his own place, very well from the Peak.

Grace assented; and, immediately after breakfast, begged Jael to be in the way to accompany her. She divined, with feminine quickness, that Mr. Coventry would be very apt, if he pointed out Bollinghope House to her from the top of a mountain, to say, "Will you be its mistress?" but, possibly, she did not wish to be hurried, or it may have been only a mere instinct, an irrational impulse of self-defence, with which the judgment had nothing to do; or perhaps it was simple modesty. Any way, she engaged Jael to be of the party.

It was talked of again at luncheon, and then Mr. Raby put in a word. "I have one stipulation to make, young people, and that is that you go up the east side, and down the same way. It is all safe walking on that side. I shall send you in my four-wheel to the foot of the hill, and George will wait for you there at the 'Colley Dog' public-house, and bring you home again."

This was, of course, accepted with thanks, and the four-wheel came round at two o'clock. Jael was seated in front by the side of George, who drove; Mr. Coventry and Grace, behind. He had his fur-cloak to keep his companion warm on returning from the hill; but Mr. Raby, who did nothing by halves, threw in some more wraps, and gave a warm one to Jael; she was a favourite with him, as indeed were all the Dences.

They started gaily, and rattled off at a good pace. Before they had got many yards on the high-road, they passed a fir-plantation, belonging to Mr. Raby,



and a magpie fluttered out of this, and flew across the road before them.

Jael seized the reins, and pulled them so powerfully, she stopped the pony directly. "Oh, the foul bird!" she cried, "turn back! turn back!"

"What for?" inquired Mr. Coventry.

"We shall meet with trouble else. One magpie! and right athwart us too."

"What nonsense!" said Grace.

"Nay, nay, it is not; Squire knows better. Wait just one minute, till I speak to Squire." She sprang from the carriage with one bound, and, holding up her dress with one hand, ran into the house like a lapwing.

"The good, kind, silly thing!" said Grace Carden.

Jael soon found Mr. Raby, and told him about the magpie, and begged him to come out and order them back.

But Mr. Raby smiled, and shook his head. "That won't do. Young ladies and gentlemen of the present day don't believe in omens."

"But you do know better, sir. I have heard father say you were going into Hillsborough with him one day, and a magpie flew across, and father persuaded you to turn back."

"That is true; he was going in to buy some merino sheep, and I to deposit my rents in Carrington's bank. Next day the bank broke. And the merino sheep all died within the year. But how many thousand times does a magpie cross us and nothing come of it? Come, run away, my good girl, and don't keep them waiting."

Jael obeyed, with a sigh. She went back to her party—they were gone. The carriage was just dis-



appearing round a turn in the road. She looked at it with amazement, and even with anger. It seemed to her a brazen act of bad faith.

"I wouldn't have believed it of her," said she, and went back to the house, mortified and grieved. She did not go to Mr. Raby again; but he happened to catch sight of her about an hour afterwards, and called to her—"How is this, Jael? Have you let them go alone, because of a magpie?" And he looked displeased.

"Nay, sir: she gave me the slip, while I went to speak to you for her good; and I call it a dirty trick, saving your presence. I told her, I'd be back in a moment."

"Oh, it is not her doing, you may be sure; it is the young gentleman. He saw a chance to get her alone, and of course he took it. I am not very well pleased; but I suppose she knows her own mind. It is to be a marriage, no doubt." He smoothed it over, but was a little put out, and stalked away without another word: he had said enough to put Jael's bosom in a flutter, and open a bright prospect to her heart; Miss Carden once disposed of in marriage, what might she not hope? She now reflected, with honest pride, that she had merited Henry's love by rare unselfishness. She had advised him loyally, had even co-operated with him as far as any poor girl, with her feelings for him, could do; and now Mr. Coventry was going to propose marriage to her rival, and she believed Miss Carden would say "yes," though she could not in her heart believe that even Miss Carden did not prefer the other. "Ay, lad," said she, "if I am to win thee, I'll be able to say I won thee fair."



These sweet thoughts and hopes soon removed her temporary anger, and nothing remained to dash the hopeful joy, that warmed that large and loyal heart this afternoon, except a gentle misgiving that Mr. Coventry might make Grace a worse husband than she deserved. It was thus she read the magpie, from three o'clock till six, that afternoon.

When a man and a woman do anything wrong, it is amusing to hear the judgments of other men and women thereupon. The men all blame the man, and the women all the woman. That is judgment, is it not?

But in some cases our pitchfarthing judgments must be either heads or tails; so Mr. Raby, who had cried heads, when a Mrs. Raby would have cried 'woman,' was right: it *was* Mr. Coventry, and not Miss Carden, who leaned over to George, and whispered, "A sovereign, to drive on without her! Make some excuse."

The cunning Yorkshire groom's eye twinkled at this, and he remained passive a minute or two: then, said suddenly, with well-acted fervour, "I can't keep the pony waiting in the cold like this;" applied the whip, and rattled off with such decision, that Grace did not like to interfere, especially as George was known to be one of those hard masters, an old servant.

So, by this little ruse, Mr. Coventry had got her all to himself for the afternoon. And now she felt sure he would propose that very day.

She made no movement whatever either to advance or to avoid the declaration.

It is five miles from Raby Hall, through Cairnhope



village, to the eastern foot of Cairnhope; and while George rattles them over the hard and frosty road, I will tell the reader something about this young gentleman, who holds the winning cards.

Mr. Frederick Coventry was a man of the world. He began life with a good estate, and a large fund accumulated during his minority.

He spent all the money in learning the world at home and abroad; and, when it was all gone, he opened one eye.

But, as a man cannot see very clear with a single orb, he exchanged rouge-et-noir, &c., for the share-market, and, in other respects, lived as fast as ever, till he had mortgaged his estate rather heavily. Then he began to open both eyes.

Next, he fell in love with Grace Carden; and upon that he opened both eyes very wide, and wished very much he had his time to live over again.

Nevertheless, he was not much to be pitied. He had still an estate, which, with due care, could pay off its encumbrances; and he had gathered some valuable knowledge. He knew women better than most men, and he knew whist profoundly. Above all, he had acquired what Voltaire justly calls "le grand art de plaire;" he had studied this art, as many women study it, and few men. Why, he even watched the countenance, and smoothed the rising bristles of those he wished to please, or did not wish to displease. This was the easier to him that he had no strong convictions on any great topic. It is your plaguey convictions that make men stubborn and disagreeable.

A character of this kind is very susceptible, either



of good or evil influences; and his attachment to Grace Carden was turning him the right way.

Add to this a good figure and a distinguished air, and you have some superficial idea of the gentleman, towards whom Grace Carden found herself drawn by circumstances, and not unwillingly, though not with that sacred joy and thrill which marks a genuine passion.

They left George and the trap at the "Colley Dog," and ascended the mountain. There were no serious difficulties on this side; but still there were little occasional asperities, that gave the lover an opportunity to offer his arm; and Mr. Coventry threw a graceful devotion even into this slight act of homage. He wooed her with perfect moderation at first; it was not his business to alarm her at starting; he proceeded gradually; and, by the time they had reached the summit, he had felt his way, and had every reason to hope she would accept him.

At the summit the remarkable beauty of the view threw her into raptures, and interrupted the more interesting topic on which he was bent.

But the man of the world showed no impatience (I don't say he felt none); he answered all Grace's questions, and told her what all the places were.

But, by-and-by, the atmosphere thickened suddenly in that quarter, and he then told her gently he had something to show her on the other side the nob.

He conducted her to a shed the shepherds had erected, and seated her on a rude bench. "You must be a little tired," he said.



Then he showed her, in the valley, one of those delightful old red brick houses, with white stone facings. "That is Bollinghope."

She looked at it with polite interest.

"Do you like it?"

"Very much. It warms the landscape so."

He expected a more prosaic answer; but he took her cue. "I wish it was a great deal prettier than it is, and its owner a much better man; richer—wiser——"

"You are hard to please, Mr. Coventry."

"Miss Carden—Grace—may I call you Grace?"

"It seems to me you have done it."

"But I had no right."

"Then, of course, you will never do it again."

"I should be very unhappy if I thought that. Miss Carden, I think you know how dear you are to me, and have been ever since I first met you. I wish I had ten times more to offer you than I have. But I am only a poor gentleman, of good descent, but moderate means, as you see." Comedie! (Bollinghope was the sort of house that generally goes with 5,000*l.* a year at least.)

"I don't care about your means, Mr. Coventry," said Grace, with a lofty smile. "It is your amiable character that I esteem."

"You forgive me for loving you; for hoping that you will let me lead you to my poor house there, as my adored wife?"

It had come; and, although she knew it was coming, yet her face was dyed with blushes.

"I esteem you very much," she faltered. "I thank you for the honour you do me; but I—oh, pray, let



me think what I am doing." She covered her face with her hands, and her bosom panted visibly.

Mr. Coventry loved her sincerely, and his own heart beat high at this moment. He augured well from her agitation; but presently he saw something that puzzled him, and gave a man of his experience a qualm.

A tear forced its way between her fingers; another, and another, soon followed.

Coventry said to himself, "There's some other man." And he sighed heavily; but even in this moment of true and strong feeling he was on his guard, and said nothing.

It was his wisest course. She was left to herself, and an amazing piece of female logic came to Mr. Coventry's aid. She found herself crying, and got frightened at herself. That, which would have made a man pause, had just the opposite effect on her. She felt that no good could come to anybody of those wild and weak regrets that made her weep. She saw she had a weakness and a folly to cure herself of; and the cure was at hand. There was a magic in marriage; a gentleman could, somehow, *make* a girl love him when once she had married him. Mr. Coventry should be enabled to make her love him; he should cure her of this trick of crying; it would be the best thing for everybody—for *him*, for Jael, for Mr. Coventry, and even for herself.

She dried her eyes, and said, in a low, tremulous voice: "Have you spoken to papa of—of this?"

"No. I waited to be authorised by you. May I speak to him?"

"Yes."



"May I tell him——?"

"Oh, I can't tell you what to tell him. How dark it is getting. Please take me home." Another tear or two.

Then, if Coventry had not loved her sincerely, and also been a man of the world, he would have lost his temper; and if he had lost his temper, he would have lost the lady, for she would have seized the first fair opportunity to quarrel. But no, he took her hand gently, and set himself to comfort her. He poured out his love to her, and promised her a life of wedded happiness. He drew so delightful a picture of their wedded life, and in a voice so winning, that she began to be consoled, and her tears ceased.

"I believe you love me," she murmured; "and I esteem you sincerely."

Mr. Coventry drew a family ring from his pocket. It was a sapphire of uncommon beauty.

"This was my mother's," said he. "Will you do me the honour to wear it, as a pledge?"

But the actual fetter startled her, I think. She started up, and said, "Oh, please take me home first! *It is going to snow.*"

Call her slippery, if you don't like her; call her unhappy and wavering, if you do like her.

Mr. Coventry smiled now at this attempt to put off the inevitable, and complied at once.

But, before they had gone a hundred yards, the snow did really fall, and so heavily that the air was darkened.

"We had better go back to the shed till it is over," said Mr. Coventry.

"Do you think so?" said Grace, doubtfully. "Well."



And they went back.

But the snow did not abate, and the air got darker. So, by-and-by, Grace suggested that Mr. Coventry should run down the hill, and send George up to her with an umbrella.

"What, and leave you alone?" said he.

"Well, then, we had better go together."

They started together.

By this time the whole ground was covered about three inches deep; not enough to impede their progress; but it had the unfortunate effect of effacing the distinct features of the ground; and, as the declining sun could no longer struggle successfully through the atmosphere, which was half air, half snow, they were almost in darkness, and soon lost their way. They kept slanting unconsciously to the left, till they got over one of the forks of the mountain and into a ravine: they managed to get out of that, and continued to descend; for the great thing they had to do was to reach the valley, no matter where.

But, after a long, laborious, and even dangerous descent, they found themselves beginning to ascend. Another mountain or hill barred their progress. Then they knew they must be all wrong, and began to feel rather anxious. They wished they had stayed up on the hill.

They consulted together, and agreed to go on for the present; it might be only a small rise in the ground.

And so it proved. After a while they found themselves descending again.

But now the path was full of pitfalls, hidden by the snow and the darkness.



Mr. Coventry insisted on going first.

In this order they moved cautiously on, often stumbling.

Suddenly Mr. Coventry disappeared with a sudden plunge, and rolled down a ravine, with a loud cry.

Grace stood transfixed with terror.

Then she called to him.

There was no answer.

She called again.

A faint voice replied that he was not much hurt, and would try to get back to her.

This, however, was impossible, and all he could do was to scramble along the bottom of the ravine.

Grace kept on the high ground, and they called to each other every moment. They seemed to be a long way from each other; yet they were never sixty yards apart. At last the descent moderated, and Grace rejoined him.

Then they kept in the hollow for some time, but at last found another acclivity to mount: they toiled up it, laden with snow, yet perspiring profusely with the exertion of toiling uphill through heather clogged with heavy snow.

They reached the summit, and began to descend again. But now their hearts began to quake. Men had been lost on Cairnhope before to-day, and never found alive: and they were lost on Cairnhope; buried in the sinuosities of the mountain, and in a tremendous snow-storm.

They wandered and staggered, sick at heart; since each step might be for the worse.

They wandered and staggered, miserably; and the man began to sigh, and the woman to cry.



At last they were so exhausted, they sat down in despair: and, in a few minutes, they were a couple of snow-heaps.

Mr. Coventry was the first to see all the danger they ran by this course.

"For God's sake, let us go on!" he said; "if we once get benumbed, we are lost. We *must* keep moving, till help comes to us."

Then they staggered, and stumbled on again, till they both sank into a deep snow-drift.

They extricated themselves, but, oh, when they felt that deep cold snow all round them, it was a foretaste of the grave.

The sun had set, it was bitterly cold, and still the enormous flakes fell, and doubled the darkness of the night.

They staggered and stumbled on, not now with any hope of extricating themselves from the fatal mountain, but merely to keep the blood alive in their veins. And, when they were exhausted, they sat down, and soon were heaps of snow.

While they sat thus, side by side, thinking no more of love, or any other thing but this: should they ever see the sun rise, or sit by a fireside again? suddenly they heard a sound in the air behind them, and, in a moment, what seemed a pack of hounds in full cry, passed close over their heads.

They uttered a loud cry.

"We are saved!" cried Grace. "Mr. Raby is hunting us with his dogs. That was the echo."

Coventry groaned. "What scent would lie?" said he. "Those hounds were in the air; a hundred strong."



Neither spoke for a moment, and then it was Grace who broke the terrible silence.

"THE GABRIEL HOUNDS!"

"The Gabriel hounds; that run before calamity! Mr. Coventry, there's nothing to be done now, but to make our peace with God. For you are a dead man, and I'm a dead woman. My poor papa! poor Mr. Little!"

She kneeled down on the snow, and prayed patiently, and prepared to deliver up her innocent soul to Him who gave it.

Not so her companion. He writhed away from death. He groaned, he sighed, he cursed, he complained. What was Raby thinking of, to let them perish?

Presently he shouted out,—“I'll not die this dog's death, I will not. I'll save myself, and come back for you.”

The girl prayed on, and never heeded him.

But he was already on his feet, and set off to run: and he actually did go blundering on, for a furlong and more, and fell into a mountain-stream, swollen by floods, which whirled him along with it, like a feather. It was not deep enough to drown him by submersion, but it rolled him over and over again, and knocked him against rocks and stones, and would infallibly have destroyed him, but that a sudden sharp turn in the current drove him, at last, against a projecting tree, which he clutched, and drew himself out with infinite difficulty. But, when he tried to walk, his limbs gave way; and he sank, fainting, on the ground, and the remorseless snow soon covered his prostrate body.



All this time, Grace Carden was kneeling on the snow, and was, literally, a heap of snow. She was patient and composed now, and felt a gentle sleep stealing over her.

That sleep would have been her death.

But, all of a sudden, something heavy touched her clothes, and startled her, and two dark objects passed her.

They were animals.

In a moment it darted through her mind that animals are wiser than man in some things. She got up with difficulty, for her limbs were stiffened, and followed them.

The dark forms struggled on before. They knew the ground, and soon took her to the edge of that very stream into which Coventry had fallen.

They all three went within a yard of Mr. Coventry, and still they pursued their way; and Grace hoped they were making for some shelter. She now called aloud to Mr. Coventry, thinking he must be on before her. But he had not recovered his senses.

Unfortunately, the cry startled the sheep, and they made a rush, and she could not keep up with them: she toiled, she called, she prayed for strength; but they left her behind, and she could see their very forms no more. Then she cried out in agony, and still, with that power of self-excitement, which her sex possess in an eminent degree, she struggled on and on, beyond her strength, till, at last, she fell down from sheer exhaustion, and the snow fell fast upon her body.

But, even as she lay, she heard a tinkling. She took it for sheep-bells, and started up once more, and once more cried to Mr. Coventry; and this time he



heard her, and shook off his deadly lethargy, and tried to hobble towards her voice.

Meantime, Grace struggled towards the sound, and lo, a light was before her, a light gleaming red and dullish in the laden atmosphere. With her remnant of life and strength, she dashed at it, and found a wall in her way. She got over it somehow, and saw the light quite close, and heard the ringing of steel on steel.

She cried out for help, for she felt herself failing. She tottered along the wall of the building, searching for a door. She found the porch. She found the church door. But by this time she was quite spent; her senses reeled; her cry was a moan.

She knocked once with her hands. She tried to knock again; but the door flew suddenly open, and, in the vain endeavour to knock again, her helpless body, like a pillar of snow, fell forward; but Henry Little caught her directly, and then she clutched him feebly, by mere instinct.

He uttered a cry of love and alarm. She opened her filmy eyes, and stared at him. Her cold neck and white cheek rested on his bare and glowing arm.

The moment he saw it was really Grace Carden that had fallen inanimate into his arms, Henry Little uttered a loud cry of love and terror, and, putting his other sinewy arm under her, carried her swiftly off to his fires, uttering little moans of fear and pity as he went; he laid her down by the fire, and darted to the forge, and blew it to a white heat; and then darted back to her, and kissed her cold hands with pretty moans of love; and then blew up the other fires: and



then back to her, and patted her hands, and kissed them with all his soul, and drew them to his bosom to warm them; and drew her head to his heart to warm her; and all with pretty moans of love, and fear, and pity; and the tears rained out of his eyes at sight of her helpless condition, and the tears fell upon her brow and her hands: and all this vitality and love soon electrified her: she opened her eyes, and smiled faintly, but such a smile, and murmured, "It's you," and closed her eyes again.

Then he panted out, "Yes, it is I,—a friend. I won't hurt you,—I won't tell you how I love you any more,—only live! Don't give way. You shall marry who you like. You shall never be thwarted, nor worried, nor made love to again; only be brave and live; don't rob the world of the only angel that is in it. Have mercy, and live! I'll never ask more of you than that. Oh, how pale! I am frightened. Cursed fires, have you no warmth *in* you?" And he was at the bellows again. And the next moment back to her, imploring her, and sighing over her, and saying the wildest, sweetest, drollest things, such as only those who love can say, in moments when hearts are bursting.

How now? Her cheek that was so white is pink—pinker—red—scarlet. She is blushing.

She had closed her eyes at Love's cries. Perhaps she was not altogether unwilling to hear that divine music of the heart, so long as she was not bound to reply and remonstrate,—being insensible.

But now she speaks, faintly, but clearly, "Don't be frightened. I promise not to die. Pray don't cry so." Then she put out her hand to him, and



turned her head away, and cried herself, gently, but plenteously.

Henry, kneeling by her, clasped the hand she lent him with both his, and drew it to his panting heart in ecstasy.

Grace's cheeks were rosy red.

They remained so a little while in silence.

Henry's heart was too full of beatitude to speak. He drew her a little nearer to the glowing fires, to revive her quite; but still kneeled by her, and clasped her hand to his heart. She felt it beat, and turned her blushing brow away, but made no resistance: she was too weak.

"Hallo!" cried a new voice, that jarred with the whole scene; and Mr. Coventry hobbled in sight. He gazed in utter amazement on the picture before him.

## CHAPTER XII.

GRACE snatched her hand from Henry, and raised herself with a vigour that contrasted with her late weakness. "Oh, it is Mr. Coventry. How wicked of me to forget him for a moment! Thank Heaven you are alive. Where have you been?"

"I fell into the mountain stream, and it rolled me down, nearly to here. I think I must have fainted on the bank. I found myself lying covered with snow; it was your beloved voice that recalled me to life."

Henry turned yellow, and rose to his feet.

Grace observed him, and replied, "Oh, Mr. Coventry, this is too high-flown. Let us both return thanks to the Almighty, who has preserved us, and, in the



next place, to Mr. Little: we should both be dead but for him." Then, before he could reply, she turned to Little, and said, beseechingly, "Mr. Coventry has been the companion of my danger."

"Oh, I'll do the best I can for him," said Henry, doggedly. "Draw nearer the fire, sir." He then put some coal on the forge, and blew up an amazing fire: he also gave the hand-bellows to Mr. Coventry, and set him to blow at the small grates in the mausoleum. He then produced a pair of woollen stockings. "Now, Miss Carden," said he, "just step into that pew, if you please, and make a dressing-room of it."

She demurred, faintly, but he insisted, and put her into the great pew, and shut her in.

"And now, please take off your shoes and stockings, and hand them over the pew to me."

"Oh, Mr. Little; you are giving yourself so much trouble."

"Nonsense. Do what you are bid." He said this a little roughly.

"I'll do whatever *you* bid me," said she, meekly: and instantly took off her dripping shoes, and stockings, and handed them over the pew. She received, in return, a nice warm pair of worsted stockings.

"Put on these directly," said he, "while I warm your shoes."

He dashed all the wet he could out of the shoes, and, taking them to the forge, put hot cinders in: he shook the cinders up and down the shoes so quickly, they had not time to burn, but only to warm and dry them. He advised Coventry to do the same, and said he was sorry he had only one pair of stockings to lend. And that was a lie: for he was glad he had only one



pair to lend. When he had quite dried the shoes, he turned round, and found Grace was peeping over the pew, and looking intolerably lovely in the fire-light. He kissed the shoes furtively, and gave them to her. She shook her head in a remonstrating way, but her eyes filled.

He turned away, and, rousing all his generous manhood, said, "Now you must both eat something, before you go." He produced a Yorkshire pie, and some bread, and a bottle of wine. He gave Mr. Coventry a saucepan, and set him to heat the wine; then turned up his sleeves to the shoulder, blew his bellows, and, with his pincers, took a lath of steel and placed it in the white embers. "I have only got one knife, and you won't like to eat with that. I must forge you one apiece."

Then Grace came out, and stood looking on, while he forged knives, like magic, before the eyes of his astonished guests. Her feet were now as warm as a toast, and her healthy young body could resist all the rest. She stood, with her back to the nearest pew, and her hands against the pew too, and looked with amazement, and dreamy complacency, at the strange scene before her: a scene well worthy of Salvator Rosa: though, in fact, that painter never had the luck to hit on so variegated a subject.

Three broad bands of light shot from the fires, expanding in size, but weakening in intensity. These lights, and the candles at the west end, revealed in a strange combination the middle ages, the nineteenth century, and eternal nature.

Nature first. Snow gleaming on the windows. Oh, it was cosy to see it gleam, and sparkle, and to think



"Aha! you all but killed me; now King Fire warms both thee and me." Snow-flakes, of enormous size, softly descending, and each appearing a diamond brooch, as it passed through the channels of fiery light.

The middle ages.—Massive old arches, chipped, and stained; a mouldering altarpiece, dog's-eared, (Henry had nailed it up again all but the top corner, and in it still faintly gleamed the Virgin's golden crown.) Pulpit, richly carved, but mouldering: gaunt walls, streaked and stained by time. At the west end, one saint—the last of many—lit by two candles, and glowing ruby red across the intervening gulf of blackness: on the nearest wall an inscription, that still told, in rusty letters, how Giles de la Beche had charged his lands with six merks a year for ever, to buy bread and white watered herrings, the same to be brought into Cairnhope Church every Sunday in Lent, and given to two poor men and four women; and the same on Good Friday with a penny dole, and, on that day, the clerk to toll the bell at three of the clock after noon, and read the lamentation of a sinner, and receive one groat.

Ancient monuments, sculptures with here an arm gone, and here a head, that yet looked half alive in the weird and partial light.

And between one of those mediæval sculptures, and that mouldering picture of the Virgin, stood a living horse, munching his corn; and in the foreground was a portable forge, a mausoleum turned into fires and hot plate, and a young man, type of his century, forging table knives amidst the wrecks of another age.

When Grace had taken in the whole scene with wonder, her eye was absorbed by this one figure, a model of manly strength, and skill, and grace. How



lightly he stepped: how easily his left arm blew the coals to a white heat, with blue flames rising from them. How deftly he drew out the white steel. With what tremendous force his first blows fell, and scattered hot steel around. Yet all that force was regulated to a hair—he beat, he moulded, he never broke. Then came the lighter blows; and not one left the steel as it found it. In less than a minute the bar was a blade. It was work incredibly unlike his method in carving; yet, at a glance, Grace saw it was also perfection, but in an opposite style. In carving, the hand of a countess; in forging, a blacksmith's arm.

She gazed with secret wonder and admiration; and the comparison was to the disadvantage of Mr. Coventry; for he sat shivering, and the other seemed all power. And women adore power.

When Little had forged the knives and forks, and two deep saucers, with magical celerity, he plunged them into water a minute, and they hissed; he sawed off the rim of a pew, and fitted handles.

Then he washed his face and hands, and made himself dry and glowing; let down his sleeves, and served them some Yorkshire pie, and bread, and salt, and stirred a little sugar into the wine, and poured it into the saucers.

“Now eat a bit, both of you, before you go.”

Mr. Coventry responded at once to the invitation.

But Grace said timidly, “Yes, if you will eat with us.”

“No, no,” said he. “I’ve not been perished with snow, nor rolled in a river.”

Grace hesitated still; but Coventry attacked the pie



directly. It was delicious. "By Jove, sir," said he, "you are the prince of blacksmiths."

"Blacksmiths!" said Grace, colouring high. But Little only smiled satirically.

Grace, who was really faint with hunger, now ate a little; and then the host made her sip some wine.

The food and wine did Mr. Coventry so much good, that he began to recover his superiority, and expressed his obligations to Henry in a tone which was natural, and not meant to be offensive; but yet it was so, under all the circumstances: there was an underlying tone of condescension. It made Grace fear he would offer Henry his purse at leaving.

Henry himself writhed under it; but said nothing. Grace, however, saw his ire, his mortification, and his jealousy, in his face, and that irritated her; but she did not choose to show either of the men how much it angered her.

She was in a most trying situation, and all the woman's wit and tact were keenly on their guard.

What she did was this: she did not utter one word of remonstrance, but she addressed most of her remarks to Mr. Little; and, though the remarks were nothing in themselves, she contrived to throw profound respect into them. Indeed, she went beyond respect. She took the tone of an inferior addressing a superior.

This was nicely calculated to soothe Henry, and also to make Coventry, who was a man of tact, change his own manner.

Nor was it altogether without that effect. But then it annoyed Coventry, and made him wish to end it.



After a while he said, "My dear Grace, it can't be far from Raby Hall. I think you had better let me take you home at once."

Grace coloured high, and bit her lip.

Henry was green with jealous anguish.

"Are you quite recovered, yourself?" said Grace, demurely, to Mr. Coventry.

"Quite; thanks to this good fellow's hospitality."

"Then *would* you mind going to Raby, and sending some people for me? I really feel hardly equal to fresh exertion just yet."

This proposal brought a flush of pleasure to Henry's cheek, and mortified Mr. Coventry cruelly in his turn.

"What, go and leave you here? Surely you cannot be serious."

"Oh, *I* don't wish you to leave me. Only you seemed in a hurry."

Henry was miserable again.

Coventry did not let well alone. He alluded delicately but tenderly to what had passed between them, and said he could not bear her out of his sight until she was safe at Raby. The words and the tone were those of a lover, and Henry was in agony: thereupon Grace laughed it off. "Not bear me out of your sight!" said she. "Why, you ran away from me, and tumbled into the river. Ha! ha! ha! And" (very seriously) "we should both be in another world but for Mr. Little."

"You are very cruel," said Mr. Coventry. "When you gave up in despair, I ran for help. You punish me for failure; punish me savagely."

"Yes, I was ungenerous," said Grace. "Forgive



me." But she said it rather coolly, and not with a very penitent air.

She added an explanation more calculated to please Henry than him. "Your gallantry is always graceful; and it is charming, in a drawing-room; but in this wild place, and just after escaping the grave, let us talk like sensible people. If you and I set out for Raby Hall alone, we shall lose our way again, and perish, to a certainty. But I think Mr. Little must know the way to Raby Hall."

"Oh, then," said Coventry, catching at her idea, "perhaps Mr. Little would add to the great obligation under which he has laid us both by going to Raby Hall and sending assistance hither."

"I can't do that," said Henry, roughly.

"And that is not at all what I was going to propose," said Grace, quietly. "But perhaps you would be so good as to go with us to Raby Hall? Then I should feel safe; and I want Mr. Raby to thank you, for I feel how cold and unmeaning all I have said to you is; I seem to have no words." Her voice faltered, and her sweet eyes filled.

"Miss Carden," said the young man, gravely, "I can't do that. Mr. Raby is no friend of mine, and he is a bigoted old man, who would turn me out of this place if he knew. Come, now, when you talk about gratitude to me for not letting you be starved to death, you make me blush. Is there a man in the world that wouldn't?—But this I do say; it would be rather hard if you two were to go away, and cut my throat in return; and, if you open your mouths ever so little, either of you, you *will* cut my throat. Why, ask yourselves, have I set up my workshop in such a place as



this,—by choice? It takes a stout heart to work here, I can tell you, and a stout heart to sleep here over dead bones.”

“I see it all. The Trades Unions!”

“That is it. So, now, there are only two ways. You must promise me never to breathe a word to any living soul, or I must give up my livelihood, and leave the country.”

“What, cannot you trust me? Oh, Mr. Little!”

“No, no; it’s this gentleman. He is a stranger to me, you know; and, you see, my life may be at stake, as well as my means.”

“Mr. Coventry is a gentleman, and a man of honour. He is incapable of betraying you.”

“I should hope so,” said Coventry. “I pledge you the word of a gentleman I will never let any human creature know that you are working here.”

“Give me your hand on that, if you please.”

Coventry gave him his hand with warmth and evident sincerity.

Young Little was reassured. “Come,” said he, “I feel I can trust you both. And, sir, Miss Carden will tell you what happened to me in Cheetham’s works; and then you will understand what I risk upon your honour.”

“I accept the responsibility; and I thank you for giving me this opportunity to show you how deeply I feel indebted to you.”

“That is square enough. Well, now my mind is at ease about that, I’ll tell you what I’ll do; I won’t take you quite to Raby Hall; but I’ll take you so near to it you can’t miss it: and then I’ll go back to my work.”



He sighed deeply at the lonely prospect, and Grace heard him.

"Come," said he, almost violently, and led the way out of the church. But he stayed behind to lock the door, and then joined them.

They all three went together, Grace in the middle.

There was now but little snow falling, and the air was not so thick; but it was most laborious walking, and soon Mr. Coventry, who was stiff and in pain, fell a little behind, and groaned as he hobbled on.

Grace whispered to Henry: "Be generous. He has hurt himself so."

This made Henry groan in return. But he said nothing. He just turned back to Coventry,—“You can't get on without help, sir; lean on me.”

The act was friendly, the tone surly. Coventry accepted the act, and noted the tone in his memory.

When Grace had done this, she saw Henry misunderstood it, and she was sorry, and waited an opportunity to restore the balance: but, ere one came, a bell was heard in the air; the great alarm-bell of Raby Hall.

Then faint voices were heard of people calling to each other here and there in the distance.

“What is it?” asked Grace.

Henry replied,—“What should it be? The whole country is out after you. Mr. Raby has sense enough for that.”

“Oh, I hope they will not see the light in the church, and find you out.”

“You are very good to think of that. Ah! there's a bonfire: and here comes a torch. I must go and



quench my fires. Good-by, Miss Carden. Good evening, sir."

With this, he retired; but, as he went, he sighed.

Grace said to Coventry,—“Oh, I forgot to ask him a question:” and ran after him. “Mr. Little!”

He heard and came back to her.

She was violently agitated. “I can’t leave you so,” she said. “Give me your hand.”

He gave it her.

“I mortified you; and you have saved me.” She took his hand, and, holding it gently in both her little palms, sobbed out,—“Oh, think of something I can do, to show my gratitude, my esteem. Pray, pray, pray.”

“Wait two years for me.”

“Oh, not that. I don’t mean that.”

“That or nothing. In two years I’ll be as good a gentleman as *he* is. I’m not risking my life in that church for nothing. If you have one grain of pity or esteem for me, wait two years.”

“Incurable!” she murmured: but he was gone.

Coventry heard the prayer. That was loud and earnest enough. Her reply he could not hear.

She rejoined him, and the torch came rapidly forward.

It was carried by a lass, with her gown pinned nearly to her knees, and displaying powerful and grand limbs: she was crying, like the tenderest woman, and striding through the snow, like a young giant.

When the snow first came down, Mr. Raby merely ordered large fires to be lighted and fed in his guests’ bed-rooms; he feared nothing worse for them than a good wetting.



When dinner-time came, without them, he began to be anxious, and sent a servant to the little public-house, to inquire if they were there.

The servant had to walk through the snow, and had been gone about an hour, and Mr. Raby was walking nervously up and down the hall, when Jael Dence burst in at the front door, as white as a sheet, and gasped out in his face: "THE GABRIEL HOUNDS!!"

Raby ran out directly, and sure enough, that strange pack were passing in full cry over the very house. It was appalling. He was dumb with awe for a moment. Then he darted into the kitchen and ordered them to ring the great alarm-bell incessantly: then into the yard, and sent messengers to the village, and to all his tenants, and in about an hour there were fifty torches, and as many sheep-bells, directed upon Cairn-hope hill; and, as men and boys came in from every quarter, to know why Raby's great alarm-bell was ringing, they were armed with torches, and sent up Cairnhope.

At last the servant returned from "The Colley Dog," with the alarming tidings that Miss Carden and Mr. Coventry had gone up the hill, and never returned. This, however, was hardly news. The Gabriel hounds always ran before calamity.

At about eleven o'clock, there being still no news of them, Jael Dence came to Mr. Raby wringing her hands. "Why do all the men go east for them?"

"Because they are on the east side."

"How can ye tell that? They have lost their way."

"I am afraid so," groaned Raby.

"Then why do you send all the men as if they



hadn't lost their way? East side of Cairnhope! why that is where they ought to be, but it is not where they are, man."

"You are a good girl, and I'm a fool," cried Raby. "Whoever comes in after this, I'll send them up by the old church."

"Give me a torch, and I'll run myself."

"Ay, do, and I'll put on my boots, and after you."

Then Jael got a torch, and kilted her gown to her knees, and went striding through the snow with desperate vigour, crying as she went, for her fear was great and her hope was small, from the moment she heard the Gabriel hounds.

Owing to the torch, Grace saw her first, and uttered a little scream: a loud scream of rapture replied: the torch went anywhere, and gentle and simple were locked in each other's arms, Jael sobbing for very joy after terror, and Grace for sympathy, and also because she wanted to cry, on more accounts than one.

Another torch came on, and Jael cried triumphantly, "This way, Squire! She is here!" and kissed her violently again.

Mr. Raby came up, and took her in his arms, without a word, being broken with emotion: and, after he had shaken Coventry by both hands, they all turned homewards, and went so fast that Coventry gave in with a groan.

Then Grace told Jael what had befallen him, and just then another torch came in, held by George the blacksmith, who, at sight of the party, uttered a stentorian cheer, and danced upon the snow.

"Behave, now," said Jael, "and here's the gen-



tleman sore hurt in the river; Geordie, come and make a chair with me."

George obeyed, and put out his hands, with the fingers upwards; Jael did the same, with the fingers downwards: they took hands, and, putting their stalwart arms under Coventry, told him to fling an arm round each of their necks: he did so, and up he went; he was no more than a feather to this pair, the strongest man and woman in Cairnhope.

As they went along, he told them his adventure in the stream, and, when they heard it, they ejaculated to each other, and condoled with him kindly, and assured him he was alive by a miracle.

They reached Raby, and, in the great hall, the Squire collected his people and gave his orders. "Stop the bell. Broach a barrel of ale, and keep open house, so long as malt, and bacon, and cheese last. Turn neither body nor beast from my door this night, or may God shut His gate in your faces. Here are two guineas, George, to ring the church bells, you and your fellows; but sup here first. Cans of hot water upstairs, for *us*. Lay supper, instead of dinner; brew a bowl of punch. Light all the Yule candles, as if it was Christmas eve. But first down on your knees, all of ye, whilst I thank God, who has baffled those Gabriel Hell-hounds for once, and saved a good man and a bonny lass from a dog's death."

They all went down on their knees, on the marble floor, directly, and the Squire uttered a few words of hearty thanksgiving, and there was scarcely a dry eye.

Then the guests went upstairs, and had their hot baths, and changed their clothes, and came down to supper in the blazing room.



Whilst they were at supper, the old servant, who waited on them, said something in a low voice to his master. He replied that he would speak to the man in the hall.

As soon as he was gone, Miss Carden said in French, "Did you hear that?"

"No."

"Well, I did. Now, mind your promise. We shall have to fib. You had better say nothing. Let me speak for you; ladies fib so much better than gentlemen."

Mr. Raby came back, and Grace waited to see if he would tell her. I don't think he intended to, at first; but he observed her eyes inquiring, and said, "One of the men, who was out after you to-night, has brought in word there is a light in Cairnhope old church."

"Do you believe it?"

"No. But it is a curious thing; a fortnight ago (I think I told you) a shepherd brought me the same story. He had seen the church on fire; at least he said so. But mark the paralysing effect of superstition. My present informant no sooner saw this light—probably a reflection from one of the distant torches—than he coolly gave up searching for you. 'They are dead,' says he, 'and the spirits in the old church are saying mass for their souls. I'll go to supper.' So he came here to drink my ale, and tell his cock-and-bull story."

Grace put in her word with a sweet, candid face. "Sir, if there had been a light in that church, should we not have seen it?"

"Why, of course you would; you must have been



within a hundred yards of it in your wanderings. I never thought of that."

Grace breathed again.

"However, we shall soon know. I have sent George and another man right up to the church to look. It is quite clear now."

Grace felt very anxious, but she forced on a careless air. "And suppose, after all, there should be a light?"

"Then George has his orders to come back and tell me; if there is a light, it is no ghost nor spirit, but some smuggler, or poacher, or vagrant, who is desecrating that sacred place; and I shall turn out with fifty men, and surround the church, and capture the scoundrel, and make an example of him."

Grace turned cold, and looked at Mr. Coventry. She surprised a twinkle of satisfaction in his eye. She never forgot it.

She sat on thorns, and was so distraite she could hardly answer the simplest question.

At last, after an hour of cruel suspense, the servant came in, and said, "George is come back, sir."

"Oh, please let him come in here, and tell us."

"By all means. Send him in."

George appeared, the next moment, in the doorway. "Well?" said Mr. Raby.

"Well?" said Grace, pale, but self-possessed.

"Well," said George, sulkily, "it is all a lie. Th' old church is as black as my hat."

"I thought as much," said Mr. Raby. "There, go and get your supper."

Soon after this Grace went up to bed, and Jael came to her, and they talked by the fire while she was



curling her hair. She was in high spirits, and Jael eyed her with wonder and curiosity.

"But, Miss," said Jael, "the magpie was right. Oh, the foul bird! That's the only bird that wouldn't go into the ark with Noah and his folk."

"Indeed! I was not aware of the circumstance."

"'Twas so, Miss; and I know the reason. A very old woman told me."

"She must have been very old indeed, to be an authority on that subject. Well, what was the reason?"

"She liked better to perch on the roof of th' ark, and jabber over the drowning world; that was why. So, ever after that, when a magpie flies across, turn back, or look to meet ill-luck."

"That is to say the worst creatures are stronger than their Creator, and can bring us bad luck against His will. And you call yourself a Christian? Why this is Paganism. They were frightened at ravens, and you at magpies. A fig for your magpies! and another for your Gabriel hounds! God is high above them all."

"Ay, sure; but these are signs of His will. Trouble and all comes from God. And so, whenever you see a magpie, or hear those terrible hounds——"

"Then tremble! for it is all to end in a bowl of punch, and a roaring fire; and Mr. Raby, that passes for a Tartar, being so kind to me; and me being in better spirits than I have been for ever so long."

"Oh, Miss!"

"And oh, Miss, to you. Why, what is the matter? I have been in danger! Very well; am I the first? I have had an adventure! All the better. Besides, it has shown me what good hearts there are in the world,



yours amongst the rest." (Kissing her.) "Now, don't interrupt, but listen to the words of the wise and their dark sayings. Excitement is a blessing. Young ladies need it more than anybody. Half the foolish things we do, it is because the old people are so stupid and don't provide us enough innocent excitement. Dancing till five is a good thing now and then; only that is too bodily, and ends in a headache, and feeling stupider than before. But to-night, what glorious excitement! Too late for dinner—drenched with snow—lost on a mountain—anxiety—fear—the Gabriel hounds—terror—despair—resignation—sudden relief—warm stockings—delightful sympathy—petted on every side—hungry—happy—fires—punch! I never lived till to-night—I never relished life till now. How could I? I never saw Death nor Danger near enough to be worth a straw."

Jael made no attempt to arrest this flow of spirits. She waited quietly for a single pause, and then she laid her hand on the young lady's, and, fastening her eyes on her, she said, quietly,—

"You have seen *him*."

Grace Carden's face was scarlet in a moment, and she looked, with a rueful imploring glance, into those great grey searching eyes of Jael Dence.

Her fine silvery tones of eloquence went off into a little piteous whine. "You are very cunning—to believe in a magpie." And she hid her blushing face in her hands. She took an early opportunity of sending this too sagacious rustic to bed.

Next day Mr. Coventry was so stiff and sore he did not come down to breakfast. But Grace Carden,



though very sleepy, made her appearance, and had a most affectionate conversation with Mr. Raby. She asked leave to christen him again. "I must call you something, you know, after all this. Mr. Raby is cold. Godpapa is childish. What do you say to—'Uncle?'"

He said he should be delighted. Then she dipped her forefinger in water. He drew back with horror.

"Come, young lady," said he, "I know it is an age of burlesque. But let us spare the sacraments, and the altar, and such trifles."

"I'm not half so wicked as you think," said Grace. Then she wrote "uncle" on his brow, and so settled that matter.

Mr. Coventry came down about noon, and resumed his courtship. He was very tender, spoke of the perils they had endured together as an additional tie, and pressed his suit with ardour.

But he found a great change in the lady.

Yesterday, on Cairnhope Peak, she was passive, but soft and complying. To-day she was polite, but cool, and as slippery as an eel. There was no pinning her.

And, at last, she said, "The fact is, I'm thinking of our great preservation, and more inclined to pray than flirt, for once."

"And so am I," said the man of tact; "but what I offer is a sacred and life-long affection."

"Oh, of course."

"A few hours ago you did me the honour to listen to me. You even hinted I might speak to your father."



"No, no. I only asked if you *had* spoken to him."

"I will not contradict you. I will trust to your own candour. Dear Grace, tell me, have I been so unfortunate as to offend you since then?"

"No."

"Have I lost your respect?"

"Oh, no."

"Have I forfeited your good opinion?"

"Dear me, no." (A little pettishly.)

"Then how is it that I love you better, if possible, than yesterday; and you seem not to like me so well as yesterday?"

"One is not always in the same humour."

"Then you don't like me to-day?"

"Oh yes, but I do. And I shall always like you: if you don't tease me, and urge me too much. It is hardly fair to hurry me so; I am only a girl, and girls make such mistakes sometimes."

"That is true; they marry on too short an acquaintance. But you have known me more than two years, and in all that time have I once given you reason to think that you had a rival in my admiration, my love?"

"I never watched you to see. But all that time you have certainly honoured me with your attention, and I do believe you love me more than I deserve. Please do not be angry: do not be mortified. There is no occasion; I am resolved not to marry until I am of age; that is all: and where's the harm of that?"

"I will wait your pleasure; all I ask you, at present, is to relieve me of my fears, by engaging yourself to me."



"Ah; but I have always been warned against long engagements."

"Long engagements! Why, how old are you, may I ask?"

"Only nineteen. Give me a little time to think."

"If I wait till you are of age, *that will be two years.*"

"Just about. I was nineteen on the 12th of December. What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing. A sudden twinge. A man does not get rolled over sharp rocks, by a mountain torrent, for nothing."

"No, indeed."

"Never mind that, if I'm not to be punished in my heart as well. This resolution, not to marry for two years, is it your own idea? or has somebody put it into your head since we stood on Cairnhope, and looked at Bollinghope?"

"Please give me credit for it," said Grace, turning very red: "it is the only sensible one I have had for a long time."

Mr. Coventry groaned aloud, and turned very pale.

Grace said she wanted to go upstairs for her work, and so got away from him.

She turned at the door, and saw him sink into a chair, with an agony in his face that was quite new to him.

She fled to her own room, to think it all over, and she entered it so rapidly that she caught Jael crying, and rocking herself before the fire.

The moment she came in Jael got up, and affected to be very busy, arranging things; but always kept her back turned to Grace.



The young lady sat down, and leaned her cheek on her hand, and reflected very sadly and seriously on the misery she had left in the drawing-room, and the tears she had found here.

Accustomed to make others bright and happy by her bare presence, this beautiful and unselfish young creature was shocked at the misery she was sowing around her, and all for something her judgment told her would prove a chimera. And again she asked herself was she brave enough, and selfish enough, to defy her father and her godfather, whose mind was written so clearly in that terrible inscription.

She sat there, cold at heart, a long time, and at last came to a desperate resolution.

"Give me my writing-desk."

Jael brought it her.

"Sit down there where I can see you; and don't hide your tears from me. I want to see you cry. I want every help. I wasn't born to make everybody miserable: I am going to end it."

She wrote a little, and then she stopped, and sighed; then she wrote a little more, and stopped, and sighed. Then she burned the letter, and began again; and as she wrote, she sighed; and as she wrote on, she moaned.

And, as she wrote on, the tears began to fall upon the paper.

It was piteous to see the struggle of this lovely girl, and the patient fortitude that could sigh, and moan, and weep, yet go on doing the brave act that made her sigh, and moan, and weep.

At last, the letter was finished, and directed; and Grace put it in her bosom, and dismissed Jael abruptly,



almost harshly, and sat down, cold and miserable, before the fire.

At dinner-time, her eyes were so red she would not appear. She pleaded headache, and dined in her own room.

Meantime Mr. Coventry passed a bitter time.

He had heard young Little say, "Wait two years." And now Grace was evading and procrastinating, and so, literally, obeying that young man, with all manner of false pretences. This was a revelation, and cast back a bright light on many suspicious things he had observed in the church.

He was tortured with jealous agony. And it added to his misery that he could not see his way to any hostilities.

Little could easily be driven out of the country, for that matter: he had himself told them both how certainly that would befall him if he was betrayed to the Unions. But honour and gratitude forbade this line; and Coventry, in the midst of his jealous agony, resisted that temptation fiercely, would not allow his mind even to dwell upon it for a moment.

He recalled all his experiences; and, after a sore struggle of passion, he came to some such conclusion as this: That Grace would have married him if she had not unexpectedly fallen in with Little, under very peculiar and moving circumstances: that an accident of this kind would never occur again, and he must patiently wear out the effect of it.

He had observed that in playing an uphill game of love the lover must constantly ask himself, "What should I do, were I to listen to my heart?" and having ascertained that, must do the opposite. So now Mr.



Coventry grimly resolved to control his wishes for a time, to hide his jealousy, to hide his knowledge of her deceit, to hide his own anger. He would wait some months before he again asked her to marry him, unless he saw a change in her; and, meantime, he would lay himself out to please her, trusting to this, that there could be no intercourse by letter between her and a workman, and they were not likely to meet again in a hurry.

It required considerable fortitude to curb his love and jealousy, and settle on this course. But he did conquer after a hard struggle, and prepared to meet Miss Carden at dinner with artificial gaiety.

But she did not appear; and that set Mr. Coventry thinking again. Why should she have a headache? He had a rooted disbelief in women's headaches. His own head had far more reason to ache, and his heart too. He puzzled himself all dinner-time about this headache, and was very bad company.

Soon after dinner he took a leaf out of her book, pretended headache, and said he should like to take a turn by himself in the air.

What he really wanted to do was to watch Miss Carden's windows, for he had all manner of ugly suspicions.

There seemed to be a strong light in the room. He could see no more.

He walked moodily up and down, very little satisfied with himself, and at last he got ashamed of his own thoughts.

"Oh, no!" he said, "she is in her room sure enough."

He turned his back, and strolled out into the road.



Presently he heard the rustle of a woman's dress. He stepped into the shade of the firs directly, and his heart began to beat hard.

But it was only Jael Dence. She came out within a few yards of him. She had something white in her hand, which, however, she instinctively conveyed into her bosom the moment she found herself in the moonlight. Coventry saw her do it, though.

She turned to the left, and walked swiftly up the road.

Now Coventry knew nothing about this girl, except that she belonged to a class with whom money generally goes a long way. And he now asked himself whether it might not be well worth his while to enlist her sympathies on his side.

While he was coming to this conclusion, Jael, who was gliding along at a great pace, reached a turn in the road, and Mr. Coventry had to run after her to catch her.

When he got to the turn in the road, she was just going round another turn, having quickened her pace.

Coventry followed more leisurely. She might be going to meet her sweetheart; and, if so, he had better talk to her on her return.

He walked on till he saw at some distance a building, with light shining through it in a peculiar way: and now the path became very rugged and difficult. He came to a standstill, and eyed the place where his rival was working at that moment. He eyed it with a strange mixture of feelings. It had saved his life and hers, after all. He fell into another mood, and began to laugh at himself for allowing himself to be disturbed by such a rival.



But what is this? Jael Dence comes in sight again: she is making for the old church.

Coventry watched her unseen. She went to the porch, and, after she had been there some time, the door was opened just a little, then wide, and she entered the building. He saw it all in a moment: the girl was already bought by the other side, and had carried his rival a letter before his eyes.

A clandestine correspondence!

All his plans and his resolutions melted away before this discovery. There was nothing to be done but to save the poor girl from this miserable and degrading attachment, and its inevitable consequences.

He went home, pale with fury, and never once closed his eyes all night.

Next day he ordered his dog-cart early; and told Mr. Raby and Grace he was going to Hillsborough for medical advice: had a pain in his back he could not get rid of.

He called on the chief constable of Hillsborough, and asked him, confidentially, if he knew anything about a workman called Little.

"What; a Londoner, sir? the young man that is at odds with the Trades?"

"I shouldn't wonder. Yes; I think he is. A friend of mine takes an interest in him."

"And so do I. His case was a disgrace to the country, and to the constabulary of the place. It occurred just ten days before I came here, and it seems to me that nothing was done which ought to have been done."

Mr. Coventry put in a question or two, which elicited from Mr. Ransome all he knew about the matter.



"Where does this Little live?" was the next inquiry.

"I don't know; but I think you could learn at Mr. Cheetham's. The only time I ever saw Little, he was walking with the foreman of those works. He was pointed out to me. A dark young man; carries himself remarkably well—doesn't look like a workman. If they don't know at Cheetham's, I'll find him out for you in twenty-four hours."

"But this Grotait. Do you know him?"

"Oh, he is a public character. Keeps 'The Cutler's Arms', in Black Street."

"I understand he repudiates all these outrages."

"He does. But the workmen themselves are behind the scenes; and what do they call him? Why, 'Old Smitem.'"

"Ah! You are one of those who look below the surface," said the courtier.

He then turned the conversation, and, soon after, went away. He had been adroit enough to put his questions in the languid way of a man who had no personal curiosity, and was merely discharging a commission.

Mr. Ransome, as a matter of form, took a short note of the conversation; but attached no importance to it. However, he used the means at his command to find out Little's abode. Not that Mr. Coventry had positively asked him to do it; but, his attention being thus unexpectedly called to the subject, he felt desirous to talk to Little on his own account.

Mr. Coventry went straight to "The Cutler's Arms," but he went slowly. A powerful contest was now going on within him; jealousy and rage urged him onward,



honour and gratitude held him back. Then came his self-deceiving heart, and suggested that Miss Carden had been the first to break her promise (she had let Jael Dence into Little's secret), and that he himself was being undermined by cunning and deceit; strict notions of honour would be out of place in such a combat. Lastly, he felt it his *duty* to save Miss Carden from a degrading connection.

All these considerations, taken together, proved too strong for his good faith; and so stifled the voice of conscience, that it could only keep whispering against the deed, but not prevent it.

He went direct to "The Cutler's Arms." He walked into the parlour and ordered a glass of brandy-and-water, and asked if he could see Mr. Grotait, privately. Mr. Grotait came in.

"Sit down, Mr. Grotait. Will you have anything?"

"A glass of ale, sir, if you please."

When this had been brought, and left, and the parties were alone, Coventry asked him whether he could receive a communication under a strict promise of secrecy.

"If it is a trade matter, sir, you can trust me. A good many have."

"Well then, I can tell you something about a workman called Little. But before I say a word, I must make two express conditions. One is, that no violence shall be used towards him: the other, that you never reveal to any human creature it was I who told you."

"What, is he working still?"

"My conditions, Mr. Grotait?"

"I promise you absolute secrecy, sir, as far as you



are concerned. As to your other condition, the matter will work thus: if your communication should be as important as you think, I can do nothing—the man is not in the saw-trade—I shall carry the information to two other secretaries, and shall not tell them I had it from Mr. Coventry, of Bollinghope.” (Mr. Coventry started at finding himself known.) “Those gentlemen will be sure to advise with me, and I shall suggest to them to take effectual measures, but to keep it, if possible, from the knowledge of all those persons, who discredit us by their violent acts.”

“Well then, on that understanding—the man works all night in a deserted church at Cairnhope: it is all up among the hills.”

Grotait turned red. “Are you sure of this?”

“Quite sure.”

“You have seen him?”

“Yes.”

“Has he a forge?”

“Yes; and bellows, and quantities of moulds, and strips of steel. He is working on a large scale.”

“It shall be looked into, sir, by the proper persons. Indeed the sooner they are informed the better.”

“Yes, but mind, no violence. You are strong enough to drive him out of the country without that.”

“I should hope so.”

Coventry then rose, and left the place; but he had no sooner got into the street, than a sort of horror fell on him; horror of himself, distrust and dread of the consequences, to his rival but benefactor.

Almost at the door, he was met by Mr. Ransome, who stopped him and gave him Little’s address; he had obtained it without difficulty from Bayne.



"I am glad you reminded me, sir," said he; "I shall call on him myself, one of these days."

These words rang in Coventry's ears, and put him in a cold perspiration. "Fool!" thought he, "to go and ask a public officer, a man who hears everybody in turn."

What he had done disinclined him to return to Cairnhope. He made a call or two first, and loitered about, and then at last back to Raby, gnawed with misgivings and incipient remorse.

Mr. Grotait sent immediately for Mr. Parkin, Mr. Jobson, and Mr. Potter, and told them the secret information he had just received.

They could hardly believe it at first; Jobson, especially, was incredulous. He said he had kept his eye on Little, and assured them the man had gone into wood-carving, and was to be seen in the town all day.

"Ay," said Parkin, "but this is at night; and, now I think of it, I met him t'other day, about dusk, galloping east, as hard as he could go."

"My information is from a sure source," said Grotait, stiffly.

*Parkin.*—"What is to be done?"

*Jobson.*—"Is he worth another strike?"

*Potter.*—"The time is unfavourable: here's a slap of dull trade."

The three then put their heads together, and various plans were suggested and discussed, and, as the parties were not now before the public, that horror of gun-powder, vitriol, and life-preservers, which figured in their notices and resolutions, did not appear in their conversation. Grotait alone was silent and doubtful. This Grotait was the greatest fanatic of the four, and,



like all fanatics, capable of vast cruelty: but his cruelty lay in his head, rather than in his heart. Out of Trade questions, the man, though vain and arrogant, was of a genial and rather a kindly nature; and, even in Trade questions, being more intelligent than his fellows, he was sometimes invested with a gleam of humanity.

His bigotry was, at this moment, disturbed by a visitation of that kind. "I'm perplexed," said he: "I don't often hesitate on a Trade question neither. But the men we have done were always low-lived blackguards, who would have destroyed us if we had not disabled them. Now this Little is a decent young chap. He struck at the root of our Trades, so long as he wrought openly. But on the sly, and nobody knowing but ourselves, mightn't it be as well to shut our eyes a bit? My informant is not in trade."

The other three took a more personal view of the matter. Little was outwitting, and resisting them. They saw nothing for it but to stop him, by hook or by crook.

While they sat debating his case in whispers, and with their heads so close you might have covered them all with a tea-tray, a clear musical voice was heard to speak to the barmaid, and, by her direction, in walked into the council-chamber——Mr. Henry Little.

This visit greatly surprised Messrs. Parkin, Jobson, and Potter, and made them stare, and look at one another uneasily. But it did not surprise Grotait so much, and it came about in the simplest way. That morning, at about eleven o'clock, Dr. Amboyne had called on Mrs. Little, and had asked Henry, rather stiffly, whether he was quite forgetting Life, Labour, and Capital. Now the young man could not but feel



that, for some time past, he had used the good Doctor ill; had neglected and almost forgotten his benevolent hobby; so the Doctor's gentle reproach went to his heart, and he said, "Give me a day or two, sir, and I'll show you how ashamed I am of my selfish behaviour." True to this pledge, he collected all his notes together, and prepared a report, to be illustrated with drawings. He then went to Cheetham's, more as a matter of form than anything, to see if the condemned grindstone had been changed. To his infinite surprise he found it had not, and Bayne told him the reason. Henry was angry, and went direct to Grotait about it.

But as soon as he saw Jobson, and Parkin, and Potter, he started, and they started. "Oh!" said he, "I didn't expect to find so much good company. Why, here's the whole quorum."

"We will retire, sir, if you wish it."

"Not at all. My orders are to convert you all to Life, Labour, and Capital (Grotait pricked up his ears directly); and, if I succeed, the Devil will be the next to come round, no doubt. Well, Mr. Grotait, Simmons is on that same grindstone you and I condemned. And all for a matter of four shillings. I find that, in your trade, the master provides the stone, but the grinder hangs and races it, which, in one sense, is time lost. Well, Simmons declines the new stone, unless Cheetham will pay him by time for hanging and racing it: Cheetham refuses; and so, between them, that idiot works on a faulty stone. Will you use your influence with the grinder?"

"Well, Mr. Little, now, between ourselves, don't you think it rather hard that the poor workman should



have to hang and race the master's grindstone for nothing?"

"Why, they share the loss between them. The stone costs the master three pounds; and hanging it costs the workman only four or five shillings. Where's the grievance?"

"Hanging and racing a stone shortens the grinder's life; fills his lungs with grit. Is the workman to give Life and Labour for a forenoon; and is Capital to contribute nothing? Is that your view of Life, Labour, and Capital, young man?"

Henry was staggered a moment. "That is smart," said he. "But a rule of trade is a rule, till it is altered by consent of the parties that made it. Now, right or wrong, it is the rule of trade here that the small grinders find their own stones, and pay for power; but the saw-grinders are better off, for they have not to find stones, nor power, and their only drawback is that they must hang and race a new stone, which costs the master sixty shillings. Cheetham is smarting under your rules, and you can't expect him to go against any rule that saves him a shilling."

"What does the grinder think?"

"You might as well ask what the grindstone thinks."

"Well, what does the grinder *say*, then?"

"Says he'd rather run the stone out, than lose a forenoon."

"Well, sir, it is his business."

"It may be a man's business to hang himself; but it is the bystanders' to hinder him."

"You mistake me. I mean that the grinder is the only man who knows whether a stone is safe."



"Well, but this grinder does not pretend his stone is safe. All he says is, safe or not, he'll run it out. So now the question is, will you pay four shillings from your box, for this blockhead's loss of time in hanging and racing a new stone?"

All the four secretaries opened their eyes with surprise at this. But Grotait merely said he had no authority to do that; the funds of the Union were set apart for specified purposes.

"Very likely," said Henry, getting warm: "but, when there's life to be *taken*, your Union can find money irregularly; so why grudge it, when there's life to be saved perhaps, and ten times cheaper than you pay for blood?"

"Young man," said Grotait, severely, "did you come here to insult us with these worn-out slanders?"

"No, but I came to see whether you secretaries, who can find pounds to assassinate men, and blow up women and children with gunpowder, can find shillings to secure the life of one of your own members; he risks it every time he mounts his horsing."

"Well, sir, the application is without precedent, and I must decline it; but this I beg to do as courteously as the application has been made uncourteously."

"Oh, it is easy to be polite when you've got no heart."

"You are the first ever brought that charge against me."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Potter, warmly. "No heart! Mr. Grotait is known for a good husband, a tender father, and the truest friend in Hillsborough."

The others echoed these sentiments warmly and



sincerely; for, strange as it may appear to those who have not studied human nature at first hand, every word of this eulogy was strictly true.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Grotait. "But we must make allowances. Mr. Little is smarting under a gross and dastardly outrage, and also under a fair defeat; and thinks his opponents must be monsters. Now I should like to show him the contrary. Let Simmons take care of himself. You have given him good advice, and much to your credit: now have you nothing to say to us, on your own account?"

"Not a word," said Henry, steadily.

"But suppose I could suggest a way by which you could carry on your trade in Hillsborough, and offend nobody?"

"I should decline to hear it even. You and I are at war on that. You have done your worst, and I shall do my best to make you all smart for it, the moment I get a chance."

Grotait's cheek reddened with anger at this rebuff, and it cost him an effort to retain his friendly intentions. "Come, come," said he, rather surlily, "don't be in a hurry till you have heard the nature of my proposal. Here, Jess, a quart of the best ale. Now, to begin, let us drink and be comfortable together."

He passed the glass to Little, first. But the young man's blood was boiling with his wrongs, and this patronizing air irritated him to boot. He took the glass in his hand, "Here's quick exposure—sudden death—and sure damnation—to all hypocrites and assassins!" He drained the glass to this toast, flung sixpence on the table, and strode out, white with passion himself, and leaving startled faces behind.



"So be it," said Grotait; and his wicked little eye glittered dangerously.

That same evening, a signal, well known to certain workmen in Hillsborough, peeped in the window of "The Cutler's Arms." And, in consequence, six or seven ill-conditioned fellows gathered about the doors and waited patiently for further information.

Amongst these was a sturdy fellow of about nine-and-twenty, whose existence was a puzzle to his neighbours. During the last seven years he had worked only eighteen months altogether. The rest of the time he had been on the Saw-Grinders' box, receiving relief, viz.: seven shillings and sixpence weekly for himself, and two-and-sixpence for his wife, and two shillings for each child; and every now and then he would be seen with three or four sovereigns in his possession.

The name of this masterful beggar, of this invalid in theory, who, in fact, could eat three pounds of steak at a sitting, was Biggs; but it is a peculiarity of Hillsborough to defy baptismal names, and substitute others deemed spicier. Out of the parish register and the records of the police courts, the scamp was only known as Dan Tucker.

This Dan stood, with others, loitering about "The Cutler's Arms."

Presently out came Grotait, and surveyed the rascally lot. He beckoned Dan, and retired. Dan went in after him.

"Drat his luck!" said one of the rejected candidates, "he always gets the job." The rest then dispersed.

Tucker was shown into a pitch dark room, and



there a bargain was struck between him and men unseen. He and three more were to go to Cairnhope, and *do* Little. He was to avoid all those men who had lately stood at the door with him, and was to choose for his companions, Simmons the grinder, and one Sam Cole, a smooth, plausible fellow, that had been in many a dark job, unsuspected even by his wife and family, who were respectable.

Thus instructed, Tucker went to the other men, and soon reported to Grotait that he had got Cole and another all right, but that Simmons looked coldly on the job. He was in full work, for one thing, and said Little had had his squeak already, and he didn't see following him eleven miles off; he had, however, asked him whether Little had a wife and children, which question he, Tucker, could not answer.

"But I can," said Grotait. "He is a bachelor. You can tell Simmons so. There are reasons why Ned Simmons must be in this. Try him to-morrow, at dinner-time. Bid two pounds more; and—his wife is near her time—tell him this job will help him buy her wine and things," said the kind, parental, diabolical Grotait.

Next morning Henry worked with the pen for Doctor Amboyne till twelve o'clock. He then, still carrying out his friend's views, went down to Mr. Cheetham's works to talk to Simmons.

But he found an ill-looking fellow standing by the man's side, and close at his ear. This was no other than Dan Tucker, who by a neat coincidence was tempting him to *do* Little.



Yesterday's conversation had unsettled Simmons, and he did not come to work till twelve o'clock. He then fixed a small pulley-wheel to his grindstone, to make up for lost time.

He was still resisting the tempter, but more faintly than yesterday, when Little came in, and spoke to him. Both he and Dan were amazed at his appearance on the scene at that particular moment. They glared stupidly, but said nothing.

"Look here, Simmons," said Little. "I have been to your friend Grotait, and asked him to pay you for what you call time lost in hanging and racing a new stone. He won't do it. That is your *friend*. Now, I'm your *enemy*; so the Union says. Well, enemy or not, I'll do what Grotait won't. I'll pay you the four shillings for lost time, if you will stop that stone at once, and hang another."

"Why, what's wrong with stone?"

"The best judge in Hillsborough condemned it; and now, if you are not running it with an undersized pulley-wheel, to try it worse!"

Simmons got stupid and irritated between the two. His bit of manhood revolted against Little's offer, made whilst he was half lending his ear to Tucker's proposal; and, on the other hand, that very offer irritated him with Tucker, for coming and tempting him to *do* this very Little, who was a good sort.

"——you both!" said the rough fellow. "I wish you'd let me alone. Here I've lost my morning's work already." Then, to Little, "Mind thyself, old lad. Happen thou's in more danger than I am."

"What d'ye mean by that?" said Little, very sharply.



But Simmons saw he had gone too far, and now maintained a sullen silence.

Henry turned to Tucker. "I don't know who you are, but I call you to witness that I have done all I can for this idiot. Now, if he comes to harm, his blood be upon his own head."

Then Henry went off in dudgeon, and, meeting Bayne in the yard, had a long discussion with him on the subject.

The tempter took advantage of Little's angry departure, and steadily resumed his temptation.

But he was interrupted in his turn.

The defect in this grindstone was not so serious but that the stone might perhaps have been ground out with fair treatment; but, by fixing a small pulley-wheel, Simmons had caused it to rotate at furious speed. This tried it too hard, and it flew in two pieces, just as the grinder was pressing down a heavy saw on it with all his force.

One piece, weighing about five hundredweight, tore the horsing chains out of the floor, and went clean through the window (smashing the woodwork), out into the yard, and was descending on Little's head; but he heard the crash and saw it coming; he ran yelling out of the way, and dragged Bayne with him. The other fragment went straight up to the ceiling, and broke a heavy joist as if it had been a cane; then fell down again plump, and would have destroyed the grinder on the spot, had he been there; but the tremendous shock had sent him flying clean over the splatter-board, and he fell on his stomach on the wheelband of the next grindstone, and so close to the drum, that, before any one could recover the shock and seize him, the band



drew him on to the drum, and the drum, which was drawing away from the window, pounded him against the wall, with cruel thuds.

One ran and screamed to stop the power, another to cut the big wheelbands. All this took several seconds; and here seconds were torn flesh and broken bones. Just as Little darted into the room, pale with his own narrow escape, and awe-stricken at the cries of horror within, the other grinders succeeded in dragging out, from between the wall and the drum, a bag of broken bones and blood and grease, which, a minute before, was Ned Simmons, and was talking over a deed of violence to be done.

The others carried him and laid him on a horsing; and there they still supported his head and his broken limbs, sick with horror.

The man's face was white, and his eyes stared, and his body quivered. They sprinkled him with water.

Then he muttered, "All right. I'm not much hurt. —Ay, but I am though. I'm done for."

After the first terror of the scene had passed, the men were for taking him to the infirmary. But Little interposed, eagerly, "No, no. I'll pay the doctor myself sooner. He shall be nursed at home, and have all that skill can do to save him. Oh, why, why, would he not listen to me?"

A stretcher was got, and a mattress put on it, and they carried him through the streets, while one ran before to tell the unhappy wife, and Little took her address, and ran to Dr. Amboyne. The Doctor went instantly to the sufferer.

Tucker assisted to carry the victim home. He then



returned to Grotait, and told him the news. Dan was not so hardened but what he blubbered in telling it, and Grotait's eyes were moist with sympathy.

They neither of them spoke out, and said, "This upsets our design on Little." Each waited to see whether that job was to go on. Each was ashamed to mention it now. So it came to a standstill.

As for Little, he was so shocked by this tragedy, and so anxious about its victim, that he would not go out to Cairnhope. He came, in the evening, to Doctor Amboyne, to inquire, "Can he live?"

"I can't say yet. He will never work again."

Then, after a silence, he fixed his eyes on young Little, and said, "I am going to make a trial of your disposition. This is the man I suspected of blowing you up; and I'm of the same opinion still."

"Then he has got his deserts," were Henry's first words, after a pause of astonishment.

"Does that mean you forgive him, or you don't forgive him?"

"I daresay I should forgive the poor wretch, if he was to ask me."

"And not without?"

"No. I might try and put it out of my head; but that is all I could do."

"Is it true that you are the cause of his not being taken to the infirmary?"

"Yes, I said I'd pay out of my own pocket sooner; and I'm not the sort to go from my word. The man shall want for nothing, sir. But please don't ask me to love my enemies, and all that Rot. I scorn hypocrisy. Every man hates his enemies: he may hate 'em out like a man, or palaver 'em, and beg God to forgive



'em, (and that means damn 'em,) and hate 'em like a sneak; but he always hates 'em."

The Doctor laughed heartily. "Oh, how refreshing a thing it is to fall in with a fellow who speaks his real mind. However, I am not your enemy, am I?"

"No. You are the best friend I ever had—except my mother."

"I am glad you think so; because I have a favour to ask you."

"Granted, before ever you speak."

"I want to know, for certain, whether Simmons was the man who blew you up: and I see but one way of learning it. You must visit him and be kind to him; and then, my art tells me, he won't leave the world without telling you. Oblige me by taking him this bottle of wine, at once, and also this sedative, which you can administer if he is in violent pain, but not otherwise."

"Doctor," said the young man, "you always get your own way with me. And so you ought."

Little stood by Simmons's bedside.

The man's eye was set, his cheek streaked with red, and his head was bandaged. He laboured in breathing.

Young Little looked at him gravely, and wondered whether this battered figure was really the man who had so nearly destroyed him.

After some minutes of this contemplation, he said, gravely, "Simmons, I have brought you some wine."

The man stared at him, and seemed confused. He made no reply.

"Give me a spoon," said Henry.



Mrs. Simmons sat by the bedside rocking herself; she was stupefied with grief: but her sister, a handy girl, had come to her in her trouble: she brought Henry a spoon directly.

He poured out a little wine, and put it to the sufferer's lips. He drank it, and said it was rare good stuff. Henry gave him a little more.

Simmons then looked at him more intelligently and attentively, and gave a sort of shiver. "Who be you?"

"Henry Little; who advised you not to run that stone."

"Ah!" said Simmons, "I thought it was you." He seemed puzzled. But, after a while, he said, "I wish I had hearkened thee, lad. Give me some more of yonder stuff. What is it?"

"Port wine. Then he turned to the girl, and gave her a sovereign, and sent her out for some mutton chops. "Meat and wine are all the physic you are to have, my poor fellow."

"It won't be for long, lad. And a good job too. For I'm a bad 'un. I'm a bad 'un."

Henry then turned to the poor woman, and tried to say something to console her, but the words stuck in his throat. She was evidently near her confinement; and there lay her husband, worse than in his grave. Little broke down himself, while trying to comfort her.

The sufferer heard him, and said, all of a sudden, "Hold a light here."

Henry took the candle, and held it over him.

"Nay, nay, it is thy face I want to see."



Henry was puzzled at the request, but did as he was asked.

Simmons gave a groan. "Ay," said he, "thou's all right. And I lie here. That seems queer."

The sister now returned, and Henry wrote her his address, and conversed with her, and told her the whole story of the grindstone, and said that, as he had hindered Simmons from being taken to the infirmary, he felt bound to see he did not suffer by that interference. He gave her his address, and said, if anything was wanted, she must come to him, or to his mother if he should be out.

No doubt the women talked of his kindness by the sick bed, and Simmons heard it.

Early in the morning Eliza Watney called at Little's house, with her eyes very red, and said her brother-in-law wanted to speak to him.

He went with her directly; and, on the road, asked her what it was about.

"I'm ashamed to tell you," said she, and burst out crying. "But I hope God will reward you; and forgive him: he is a very ignorant man."

"Here I am, Simmons."

"So I see."

"Anything I can do for you?"

"No."

"You sent for me."

"Did I? Well, I daresay I did. But gi' me time. Gi' me time. It's noane so easy to look a man in the face, and tell him what I'm to tell thee. But I can't die with it on me. It chokes me, ever since you brought me yonder stuff, and the women set a talking.



I say—old lad—'twas I did thee yon little job at Cheetham's. But I knew no better."

There was a dead silence. And then Henry spoke.

"Who set you on?"

"Nay, that's their business."

"How did you do it?"

At this question—will it be believed?—the penitent's eye twinkled with momentary vanity. "I fastened a teacup to an iron rake, and filled the cup with powder; then I passed it in, and spilt the powder out of cup, and raked it into the smithy slack, and so on, filling and raking in. But I did thee one good turn, lad; I put powder as far from bellows as I could. Eh, but I was a bad 'un to do the like to thee: and thou's a good 'un to come here. When I saw thee lie there, all scorched and shaking, I didn't like my work; and now I hate it. But I knew no better at the time. And, you see, I've got it worse myself. And cheap served too."

"Oh, Mr. Little," said Elizabeth Watney; "*try* and forgive him."

"My girl," said Henry, solemnly, "I thought I never could forgive the man who did that cruel deed to me, and I had never injured any one. But it is hard to know one's own mind, let alone another man's. Now I look at him lying pale and battered there, it seems all wiped out. I forgive you, my poor fellow, and I hope God will forgive you too."

"Nay. He is not so soft as thou. This is how He forgives me. But I knew no better. Old gal, learn the young 'un to read, that's coming just as I'm going; it is sore against a chap if he can't read. Right and wrong, d—n 'em, they are locked up in



books, I think; locked away from a chap like me. I know a little better now. But, eh dear, dear, it is come too late." And now the poor wretch began to cry at a gleam of knowledge of right and wrong having come to him only just when he could no longer profit by it.

Henry left him at last, with the tears in his eyes. He promised them all to come every day.

He called on Dr. Amboyne, and said, "You are always right, Doctor. Simmons was the man. He has owned it, and I forgave him."

He then went and told Mr. Holdfast. That gentleman was much pleased at the discovery, and said, "Ah, but who employed him? That is what you must discover."

"I will try," said Henry. "The poor fellow had half a mind to make a clean breast; but I didn't like to worry him over it."

Returning home he fell in with Grotait and Parkin. They were talking earnestly at the door of a public-house, and the question they were discussing was whether or not Little's affair should be revived.

They were both a good deal staggered by the fate of Simmons, Parkin especially, who was rather superstitious. He had changed sides, and was now inclined to connive, or, at all events, to temporize; to abandon the matter till a more convenient time. Grotait, on the other hand, whose vanity the young man had irritated, was bent on dismounting his forge. But even he had cooled a little, and was now disinclined to violence. He suggested that it must be easy to drive a smith out of a church, by going to the parochial



authorities; and they could also send Little an anonymous letter, to tell him the Trades had their eyes on him; by this double stroke, they would probably bring him to some reasonable terms.

It certainly was a most unfortunate thing that Little passed that way just then; unfortunate that Youth is so impetuous.

He crossed the street to speak to these two potentates, whom it was his interest to let alone—if he could only have known it.

“Well, gentlemen, have you seen Simmons?”

“No,” said Mr. Parkin.

“What, not been to see the poor fellow, who owes his death to you?”

“He is not dead yet.”

“No, thank Heaven! He has got a good work to do first; some hypocrites, assassins, and cowards to expose.”

Parkin turned pale; Grotait’s eye glistened like a snake’s: he made Parkin a rapid signal to say nothing, but only listen.

“He has begun by telling me who it was that put gunpowder into my forge, and how it was done. I have forgiven him. He was only the tool of much worse villains—base, cowardly, sneaking villains. Those I shall not forgive. Oh, I shall know all about it before long. Good morning.”

This information and threat, and the vindictive bitterness and resolution with which the young man had delivered it, struck terror into the gentle Parkin, and shook even Grotait. The latter, however, soon recovered himself, and it became a battle for life or death between him and Little.



He invited Parkin to his own place, and there the pair sat closeted.

Dan Tucker and Sam Cole were sent for.

Tucker came first. He was instantly despatched to Simmons, with money from the Saw-Grinders' box. He was to ascertain how much Simmons had let out, and to adjure him to be true to the Trade, and split on no man but himself. When he had been gone about twenty minutes, Sam Cole came in, and was instructed to get two other men in place of Simmons, and be in readiness to do Little.

By-and-by Tucker returned with news. Simmons had at present split only on himself; but the women were evidently in love with Little; said he was their only friend; and he, Tucker, foresaw that, with their co-operation, Simmons would be turned inside out by Little before he died.

Grotait struck his hand on the table. "The Unions are in danger," said he. "There is but one way; Little must be made so that he can't leave Cairnhope while Simmons is alive."

So important did the crisis appear to him, that he insisted on Parkin going with him at once to Cairnhope, to reconnoitre the ground.

Parkin had a gig and a fast horse; so, in ten minutes more, they were on the road.

They reached Cairnhope, put up at the village inn, and soon extracted some particulars about the church. They went up to it, and examined it, and Grotait gave Parkin a leg up, to peer through the window.

In this position they were nailed by old George.

"What be you at?"

"What is that to you?" said Grotait.



"It is plenty. You mustn't come trespassing here. Squire won't have it."

"Trespassing in a churchyard! Why it belongs to all the world."

"Nay, this one belongs to the Lord o' the manor."

"Well, we won't hurt your church. Who keeps the key?"

"Squire Raby."

Old George from this moment followed them about everywhere, grumbling at their heels, like a mastiff.

Grotait, however, treated him with cool contempt, and proceeded to make a sketch of the door, and a little map showing how the church could be approached from Hillsborough on foot without passing through Cairnhope village. This done, he went back with Parkin to the inn, and thence to Hillsborough.

It was old Christmas Eve. Henry was working at his forge, little dreaming of danger. Yet it was close at hand, and from two distinct quarters.

Four men, with crape masks, and provided with all manner of tools, and armed with bludgeons, were creeping about the churchyard, examining and listening. Their orders were to make Little so that he should not leave Cairnhope for a month. And that, in plain English, meant to beat him within an inch of his life, if not kill him.

At the same time, a body of nine men were stealing up the road, with designs scarcely less hostile to Little.

These assailants were as yet at a considerable distance; but more formidable in appearance than the others, being most of them armed with swords, and led by a man with a double-barrelled gun.



Grotait's men, having well surveyed the ground, now crept softly up to the porch, and examined the lock.

The key was inside, and they saw no means of forcing the lock without making a noise, and putting their victim on his guard.

After a long whispered consultation, they resolved to unscrew the hinges.

These hinges were of great length, and were nailed upon the door, but screwed into the doorpost with four screws each.

Two men, with excellent tools, and masters of the business, went softly to work. One stood, and worked on the upper screws; the other kneeled, and unfastened the lower screws.

They made no more noise than a rat gnawing; yet, such was their caution, and determination to surprise their victim, that they timed all their work by Little's. Whenever the blows of his hammer intermitted, they left off; and began again when he did.

When all the screws were out but two, one above, one below, they beckoned the other two men, and these two drove large gimlets into the door, and so held it that it might not fall forward when the last screw should come out.

"Are all screws out?" whispered Cole, who was the leader.

"Ay," was the whispered reply.

"Then put in two more gimlets.

That was done.

"Now, men," whispered Cole. "Lay the door



softly down outside; then, up sticks—into church—and *do him!*”

### CHAPTER XIII.

IF Mr. Coventry, before he set all this mischief moving, could have seen the *inside* of Grace Carden's letter to Henry Little!

“DEAR MR. LITTLE,—I do not know whether I ought to write to you at all, nor whether it is delicate of me to say what I am going; but you have saved my life, and I do so want to do all I can to atone for the pain I have given you, who have been so good to me. I am afraid you will never know happiness, if you waste your invaluable life longing after what is impossible. There is an impassable barrier between you and me. But you might be happy if you would condescend to take my advice, and let yourself see the beauty and the goodness of another. The person who bears this letter comes nearer to perfection than any other woman I ever saw. If you would trust my judgment (and, believe me I am not to be mistaken in one of my own sex), if you could turn your heart towards her, she would make you very happy. I am sure she could love you devotedly, if she only heard those words from your lips, which every woman requires to hear before she surrenders her affections. Pray do not be angry with me; pray do not think it costs me little to give this strange but honest advice to one I admire so. But I feel it would be so weak and selfish in me to cling to that, which, sooner or



later, I must resign, and to make so many persons unhappy, when all might be happy, except perhaps myself.

"Once more, forgive me. Do not think me blind; do not think me heartless; but say, this is a poor girl, who is sadly perplexed, and is trying very hard to be good and wise, and not selfish.

"One line, to say you will consider my advice, and never hate nor despise

"Your grateful and unhappy friend,

"GRACE CARDEN."

When she had despatched this letter, she felt heroic. The next day she wished she had not written it, and awaited the reply with anxiety.

The next day, she began to wonder at Little's silence; and by-and-by she was offended at it. Surely what she had written with so great an effort was worth a reply.

Finally, she got it into her head that Little despised her. Upon this, she was angry with him for not seeing what a sacrifice she had made, and for despising her, instead of admiring her a little, and pitying her ever so much. The old story, in short—a girl vexed with a man for letting her throw dust in his eyes.

And, if she was vexed with Little for not appreciating her sacrifice, she was quite as angry with Coventry and Jael for being the causes of that unappreciated sacrifice. So then she was irritable and cross. But she could not be that long; so she fell into a languid, listless state: and then she let herself drift. She never sent Jael to the church again.

Mr. Coventry watched all her moods; and, when



she reached the listless stage, he came softly on again, and began to recover his lost ground.

On the fifth of January occurred a rather curious coincidence. In Hillsborough Dr. Amboyne offered his services to Mrs. Little to reconcile her and her brother. Mrs. Little feared the proposal came too late; but showed an inclination to be reconciled for Henry's sake. But Henry said he would never be reconciled to a man who had insulted his mother. He then reminded her she had sent him clandestinely into Raby Hall to see her picture. "And what did I see? Your picture was turned with its face to the wall, and insulting words written on the back—'Gone into trade.' I didn't mean to tell you, mother; but you see I have. And, after that, you may be reconciled to the old scoundrel if you like; but don't ask me." Mrs. Little was deeply wounded by this revelation. She tried to make light of it, but failed. She had been a beauty, and the affront was too bitter. Said she, "You mustn't judge him like other people: he was always so very eccentric. Turn my picture to the wall! My poor picture! Oh, Guy, Guy, could one mother have borne you and me?" Amboyne had not a word more to say: he was indignant himself.

Now that very afternoon, as if by the influence of what they call a brain-wave, Grace Carden, who felt herself much stronger with Mr. Raby than when she first came, was moved to ask him, with many apologies, and no little inward tremor, whether she might see the other side of that very picture before she went.

"What for?"

"Don't be angry, uncle dear. Curiosity."



"I do not like to refuse you anything, Grace. But—— Well, if I lend you the key, will you satisfy your curiosity, and then replace the picture as it is?"

"Yes, I will."

"And you shall do it when I am not in the room. It would only open wounds that time has skinned. I'll bring you down the key at dinner-time." Then, assuming a lighter tone, "Your curiosity will be punished; you will see your rival in beauty. That will be new to you."

Grace was half frightened at her own success, and I doubt whether she would ever have asked for the key again; but Raby's word was his bond; he handed her the key at dinner-time.

Her eyes sparkled when she got it; but she was not to open it before him; so she fell thinking: and she determined to get the gentlemen into the drawing-room as soon as she could, and then slip back and see this famous picture.

Accordingly she left the table rather earlier than usual, and sat down to her piano in the drawing-room.

But alas, her little manœuvre was defeated. Instead of the gentlemen leaving the dining-room, a servant was sent to recall her.

It was old Christmas Eve, and the Mummers were come.

Now, of all the old customs Mr. Raby had promised her, this was the pearl.

Accordingly, her curiosity took for the time another turn, and she was soon seated in the dining-room, with Mr. Raby and Mr. Coventry, awaiting the Mummers.

The servants then came in, and, when all were



ready, the sound of a fiddle was heard, and a fiddler, grotesquely dressed, entered along with two clowns, one called the Tommy, dressed in chintz and a fox's skin over his shoulders and a fox's head for a cap; and one, called the Bessy, in a woman's gown and beaver hat.

This pair introduced the true *dramatis personæ*, to the drollest violin accompaniment, consisting of chords till the end of each verse, and then a few notes of melody.

Now the first that I call on  
Is George our noble king,  
Long time he has been at war,  
Good tidings back he'll bring.  
Too-ral-loo.

Thereupon in came a man, with black breeches and red stripes at the side, a white shirt decked with ribbons over his waistcoat, and a little hat with streamers, and a sword.

The clown walked round in a ring, and King George followed him, holding his sword upright.

Meantime the female clown chanted,—

The next that we call on,  
He is a squire's son,  
He's like to lose his love,  
Because he is so young.  
Too-ral-loo.

The Squire's Son followed King George round the ring; and the clowns, marching and singing at the head, introduced another, and then another, sword-dancer, all attired like the first, until there were five marching round and round, each with his sword upright.

Then Foxey sang, to a violin accompaniment,



Now fiddler, then, take up thy fiddle,  
Play the lads their hearts' desire,  
Or else we'll break thy fiddle,  
And fling thee a back o' the fire.

On this the fiddler instantly played a dance-tune peculiar to this occasion, and the five sword-dancers danced by themselves in a ring, holding their swords out so as to form a cone.

Then a knot, prepared beforehand, was slipped over the swords, and all the swords so knotted were held aloft by the first dancer; he danced in the centre awhile, under the connected swords, then deftly drew his own sword out and handed it to the second dancer; the second gave the third dancer his sword, and so on, in rotation, till all the swords were resumed.

Raby's eyes sparkled with delight at all this, and he whispered his comments on the verses and the dance.

"King George!" said he. "Bosh! This is the old story of St. George and the Dragon, overburdened with modern additions." As to the dance, he assured her that, though danced in honour of old Christmas, it was older than Christianity, and came from the ancient Goths and Swedes.

These comments were interrupted by a man, with a white face, who burst into the assembly crying, "Will ye believe me now? Cairnhope old church is all a-fire!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

"Ay, Squire," said Abel Eaves, for he was the bearer of this strange news, "ye wouldn't believe *me*: now come and see for yourself."



This announcement set all staring; and George the blacksmith did but utter the general sentiment, when, suddenly dropping his assumed character of King George, he said, "Bless us and save us! True Christmas Eve; and Cairnhope old church alight!"

Then there was a furious buzz of tongues, and, in the midst of it, Mr. Raby disappeared, and the sword-dancers returned to the kitchen, talking over this strange matter as they went.

Grace retired to the drawing-room followed by Coventry.

She sat silent some time, and he watched her keenly.

"I wonder what has become of Mr. Raby?"

Mr. Coventry did not know.

"I hope he is not going out."

"I should think not. It is a very cold night; clear, but frosty."

"Surely he would never go to see."

"Shall I inquire?"

"No; that might put it into his head. But I wish I knew where he was."

Presently a servant brought the tea in.

Miss Carden inquired after Mr. Raby.

"He is gone out, Miss; but he won't be long, I was to tell you."

Grace felt terribly uneasy and restless; rang the bell and asked for Jael Dence. The reply was that she had not been to the hall that day.

But soon afterwards, Jael came up from the village, and went into the kitchen of Raby. There she heard news, which soon took her into the drawing-room.



"Oh, Miss," said she, "do you know where the Squire is?"

"Gone to the church?" asked Grace, trembling.

"Ay, and all the sword-dancers at his back." And she stood there and wrung her hands with dismay.

The ancients had a proverb, "Better is an army of stags with a lion for their leader, than an army of lions with a stag for their leader." The Cairnhope sword-dancers, though stout fellows and strong against a mortal foe, were but stags against the supernatural; yet, led by Guy Raby, they advanced upon the old church with a pretty bold front, only they kept twenty yards in their leader's rear. The order was to march in dead silence.

At the last turn in the road their leader suddenly halted, and, kneeling on one knee, waved to his men to keep quiet: he had seen several dark figures busy about the porch.

After many minutes of thrilling, yet chilling expectation, he rose, and told his men in a whisper to follow him again.

The pace was now expedited greatly, and still Mr. Raby, with his double-barrelled gun in his hand, maintained a lead of some yards, and his men followed as noiselessly as they could, and made for the church: sure enough it was lighted inside.

The young man who was thus beset by two distinct bands of enemies, deserved a very different fate at the hands of his fellow-creatures.

For, at this moment, though anything but happy himself, he was working some hours every day for the



good of mankind; and was every day visiting as a friend the battered saw-grinder who had once put his own life in mortal peril.

He had not fathomed the letter Grace had sent him. He was a young man and a straightforward; he did not understand the amiable defects of the female character. He studied every line of this letter, and it angered and almost disgusted him. It was the letter of a lady; but beneath the surface of gentleness and politeness lay a proposal, which he considered mean and cold-blooded. It lowered his esteem for her.

His pride and indignation were roused, and battled with his love, and they were aided by the healthy invigorating habits, into which Dr. Amboyne had at last inveigled him, and so he resisted: he wrote more than one letter in reply to Grace Carden; but, when he came to read them over and compare them with her gentle effusion, he was ashamed of his harshness, and would not send the letter.

He fought on; philanthropy in Hillsborough, forging in Cairnhope Church; and still he dreamed strange dreams now and then: for who can work, both night and day, as this man did—with impunity?

One night he dreamed that he was working at his forge, when suddenly the floor of the aisle burst, and a dead knight sprang from the grave with a single bound, and stood erect before him, in rusty armour: out of his helmet looked two eyes like black diamonds, and a nose like a falcon's. Yet, by one of the droll contradictions of a dream, this impetuous, warlike form no sooner opened its lips, than out issued a lackadaisical whine. "See my breastplate, good sir," said he. "It was bright as silver when I made it—I was like



you, I forged my own weapons, forged them with these hands.—But now the damps of the grave have rusted it. Odsbodikins! is this a thing for a good knight to appear in before his judge? And to-morrow is Doomsday, so they all say.”

Then Henry pitied the poor simple knight (in his dream), and offered his services to polish the corslet up a bit against that great occasion. He pointed towards his forge, and the knight marched to it, in three wide steps that savoured strongly of theatrical burlesque. But the moment he saw the specimens of Henry's work lying about, he drew back, and wheeled upon the man of the day with huge disdain. “What,” said he, “do you forge toys! Learn that a gentleman can only forge those weapons of war that gentlemen do use. And I took you for a Raby!”

With these bitter words he vanished, with flashing eyes and a look of magnificent scorn, and left his fiery, haughty, features imprinted clearly on Henry's memory.

One evening, as he plied his hammer, he heard a light sound at a window, in an interval of his own noise. He looked hastily up, and caught a momentary sight of a face disappearing from the window. It was gone like a flash even as he caught sight of it.

Transient as the glance was, it shook him greatly. He heated a bar of iron white hot at one end, and sallied out into the night. But there was not a creature to be seen.

Then he called aloud, “Who's there?” No reply. “Jael, was it you?” Dead silence.

He returned to his work, and set the appearance down to an ocular illusion. But his dreams had been



so vivid, that this really seemed only one step more into the realms of hallucination.

This was an unfortunate view of the matter.

On old Christmas Eve he lighted the fires in his mausoleum first, and at last succeeded in writing a letter to Grace Carden. He got out of the difficulty in the best way, by making it very short. He put it in an envelope, and addressed it, intending to give it to Jael Dence, from whom he was always expecting a second visit.

He then lighted his forge, and soon the old walls were ringing again with the blows of his hammer.

It was ten o'clock at night; a clear frosty night; but he was heated and perspiring with his ardent work, when, all of a sudden, a cold air seemed to come in upon him from a new quarter—the door. He left his forge, and took a few steps to where he could see the door. Instead of the door, he saw the blue sky.

He uttered an exclamation, and rubbed his eyes.

It was no hallucination. The door lay flat on the ground, and the stars glittered in the horizon.

Young Little ran towards the door; but, when he got near it, he paused, and a dire misgiving quelled him. A workman soon recognizes a workman's hand; and he saw Hillsborough cunning and skill in this feat, and Hillsborough cunning and cruelty lurking in ambush at the door.

He went back to his forge, and, the truth must be told, his knees felt weak under him with fears of what was to come.

He searched about for weapons, and could find nothing to protect him against numbers. Pistols he



had; but, from a wretched over-security, he had never brought them to Cairnhope Church.

Oh, it was an era of agony that minute, in which, after avoiding the ambushade that he felt sure awaited him at the door, he had nothing on earth he could do but wait and see what was to come next.

He knew that however small his chance of escape by fighting, it was his only one; and he resolved to receive the attack where he was. He blew his bellows and, cold at heart, affected to forge.

Dusky forms stole into the old church.

## CHAPTER XV.

LITTLE blew his coals to a white heat: then took his hammer into his left hand, and his little iron shovel, a weapon about two feet long, into his right.

Three assailants crept towards him, and his position was such that two at least could assail him front and rear. He counted on that, and measured their approach with pale cheek but glittering eye, and thrust his shovel deep into the white coals.

They crept nearer and nearer, and, at last, made an almost simultaneous rush on him back and front.

The man in his rear was a shade in advance of the other. Little, whose whole soul was in arms, had calculated on this, and, turning as they came at him, sent a shovelful of fiery coals into that nearest assailant's face, then stepped swiftly out of the way of the other, who struck at him too immediately for him to parry; ere he could recover the wasted blow, Little's



hot shovel came down on his head with tremendous force, and laid him senseless and bleeding on the earth, with blood running from his ears.

Little ladled the coals right and left on the other two assailants, one of whom was already yelling with the pain of the first shovelful; then, vaulting suddenly over a pew, he ran for the door.

There he was encountered by Sam Cole, an accomplished cudgel-player, who parried his blows coolly, and gave him a severe rap on the head that dazzled him. But he fought on, till he heard footsteps coming behind him, and then rage and despair seized him, he drew back, shifted his hammer into his right hand and hurled it with all his force at Cole's breast, for he feared to miss his head. Had it struck him on the breast, delivered as it was, it would probably have smashed his breastbone, and killed him; but it struck him on his throat, which was, in some degree, protected by a muffler: it struck him and sent him flying like a feather: he fell on his back in the porch, yards from where he received that prodigious blow.

Henry was bounding out after him, when he was seized from behind, and the next moment another seized him too, and his right hand was now disarmed by throwing away the hammer.

He struggled furiously with them, and twice he shook them off, and struck them with his fist, and jobbed them with his shovel quick and short, as a horse kicking.

But one was cunning enough to make a feint at his face, and then fall down and lay hold of his knees: he was about to pulverize this fellow with one blow of his shovel, when the other flung his arms round him.



It became a mere struggle. Such was his fury and his vigour, however, that they could not master him. He played his head like a snake, so that they could not seize him disadvantageously; and at last he dropped his shovel and got them both by the throat, and grasped them so fiercely that their faces were purple, and their eyes beginning to fix, when, to his dismay, he received a violent blow on the right arm that nearly broke it: he let go, with a cry of pain, and with his left hand twisted the other man round so quickly, that he received the next blow of Cole's cudgel. Then he dashed his left fist into Cole's eye, who staggered, but still barred the way; so Little rushed upon him, and got him by the throat, and would soon have settled him: but the others recovered themselves ere he could squeeze all the wind out of Cole, and it became a struggle of three to one.

He dragged them all three about with him; he kicked, he hit, he did everything that a man with one hand, and a lion's heart, could do.

But gradually they got the better of him; and at last it came to this, that two were struggling on the ground with him, and Cole standing over them all three, ready to strike.

"Now, hold him so, while I settle him," cried Cole, and raised his murderous cudgel.

It came down on Little's shoulder, and only just missed his head.

Again it came down, and with terrible force.

Up to this time he had fought as mute as a fox. But now that it had come to mere butchery, he cried out, in his agony, "They'll kill me.—My mother!—Help! Murder! Help!"



"Ay! thou'lt never forge no more!" roared Cole, and thwack came down the crushing bludgeon.

"Help! Murder! Help!" screamed the victim, more faintly; and at the next blow more faintly still.

But again the murderous cudgel was lifted high, to descend upon his young head.

As the confederates held the now breathless and despairing victim to receive the blow, and the butcher, with one eye closed by Henry's fist, but the other gleaming savagely, raised the cudgel to finish him, Henry saw a huge tongue of flame pour out at them all, from outside the church, and a report, that sounded like a cannon, was accompanied by the vicious ping of shot. Cole screamed and yelled, and dropped his cudgel, and his face was covered with blood in a moment; he yelled, and covered his face with his hands; and instantly came another flash, another report, another cruel ping of shot, and this time his hands were covered with blood.

The others rolled yelling out of the line of fire, and ran up to the aisle for their lives.

Cole tried to follow; but Henry, though sick and weak with the blows, caught him, and clung to his knees, and the next moment the place was filled with men carrying torches and gleaming swords, and led by a gentleman, who stood over Henry, in evening-dress, but with the haughty expanded nostrils, the brilliant black eyes, and all the features of that knight in rusty armour, who had come to him in his dream, and left him with scorn.

At this moment a crash was heard: two of the culprits, with desperate agility, had leaped on to the



vestry-chest, and from that on to the horse, and from him headlong out at the window.

Mr. Raby despatched all his men but one in pursuit, with this brief order,—“Take them, alive or dead,—doesn’t matter which,—they are only cutlers; and cowards.”

His next word was to Cole. “What! three blackguards to one! That’s how Hillsborough fights, eh?”

“I’m not a blackguard,” said Henry, faintly.

“That remains to be proved, sir,” said Raby, grimly.

Henry made answer by fainting away.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Henry Little came to himself, he was seated on men’s hands, and being carried through the keen refreshing air. Mr. Raby was striding on in front; the horse’s hoofs were clamping along on the hard road behind; and he himself was surrounded by swordsmen in fantastic dresses.

He opened his eyes, and thought, of course, it was another vision. But no, the man, with whose blows his body was sore, and his right arm utterly numbed, walked close to him between two sword-dancers, with Raby-marks and Little-marks upon him, viz., a face spotted with blood, and a black eye.

Little sighed.

“Eh, that’s music to me,” said a friendly voice close to him. It was the King George of the lyrical drama, and, out of poetry, George the blacksmith.

“What, it is you, is it?” said Little.



"Ay, sir, and a joyful man to hear you speak again. The cowardly varmint! And to think they have all got clear but this one! Are ye sore hurt, sir?"

"I'm in awful pain, but no bones broken." Then, in a whisper, "Where are you taking me, George?"

"To Raby Hall," was the whispered reply.

"Not for all the world! If you are my friend, put me down, and let me slip away."

"Don't ask me, don't ask me," said George, in great distress. "How could I look Squire in the face? He did put you in my charge."

"Then I'm a prisoner!" said Henry, sternly.

George hung his head, but made no reply.

Henry also maintained a sullen silence after that.

The lights of Raby came in sight.

That house contained two women, who awaited the result of the nocturnal expedition with terrible anxiety.

Its fate, they both felt, had been determined before they even knew that the expedition had started.

They had nothing to do but to wait, and pray that Henry had made his escape, or else had not been so mad as to attempt resistance.

In this view of things, the number and even the arms of his assailants were some comfort to them, as rendering resistance impossible.

As for Mr. Coventry, he was secretly delighted.

His conscience was relieved. Raby would now drive his rival out of the church and out of the county without the help of the Trades, and his act of treachery and bad faith would be harmless. Things had taken the happiest possible turn for him.



For all that, this courtier affected sympathy, and even some anxiety, to please Miss Carden, and divert all suspicion from himself. But the true ring was wanting to his words, and both the women felt them jar, and got away from him, and laid their heads together, in agitated whispers. And the result was, they put shawls over their heads, and went together out into the night.

They ran up the road, sighing and clasping their hands, but no longer speaking.

At the first turn they saw the whole body coming towards them.

"I'll soon know," said Jael, struggling with her agitation. "Don't you be seen, Miss; that might anger the Squire; and, oh, he will be a wrathful man this night, if he caught him working in yonder church."

Grace then slipped back, and Jael ran on. But no sooner did she come up with the party, than Raby ordered her back, in a tone she dared not resist.

She ran back, and told Grace they were carrying him in, hurt, and the Squire's eyes were like hot coals.

Grace slipped into the drawing-room, and kept the door ajar.

Soon afterwards, Raby, his men, and his prisoners, entered the hall, and Grace heard Raby say, "Bring the prisoners into the dining-room."

Grace Carden sat down, and leaned her head upon her hand, and her little foot beat the ground, all in a flutter.

But this ended in a spirited resolve. She rose, pale, but firm, and said, "Come with me, Jael;" and she walked straight into the dining-room. Coventry strolled in after her.



The room was still brilliantly lighted. Mr. Raby was seated at his writing-table at the far end, and the prisoners, well guarded, stood ready to be examined.

"You can't come in here," was Mr. Raby's first word to Grace.

But she was prepared for this, and stood her ground. "Excuse me, dear uncle, but I wish to see you administer justice; and, besides, I believe I can tell you something about one of the prisoners."

"Indeed! that alters the case. Somebody give Miss Carden a chair."

She sat down, and fixed her eyes upon Henry Little,—eyes that said plainly, "I shall defend you, if necessary:" his pale cheek was flushing at sight of her.

Mr. Raby arranged his papers to make notes, and turned to Cole. "The charge against you is, that you were seen this night by several persons engaged in an assault of a cruel and aggravated character. You, and two other men, attacked and overpowered an individual here present; and, while he was helpless, and on the ground, you were seen to raise a heavy cudgel——(Got the cudgel, George?)"

"Ay, your worship, here 'tis."

"—And to strike him several times on the head and limbs, with all your force."

"Oh, cruel! cruel!"

"This won't do, Miss Carden; no observations, please. In consequence of which blows he soon after swooned away, and was for some time unconscious, and——"

"Oh!"

"—For aught I know, may have received some permanent injury."



"Not he," said Cole; "he's all right. I'm the only man that is hurt; and I've got it hot; he hit me with his hammer, and knocked me down like a bullock. He's given me this black eye too."

"In self-defence, apparently. Which party attacked the other first?"

"Why they attacked me, of course," said Henry. "Four of them."

"Four! I saw but three."

"Oh, I settled one at starting, up near the forge. Didn't you find him?" (This to George.)

"Nay, we found none of the trash but this," indicating Cole, with a contemptuous jerk of the thumb.

"Now, don't all speak at once," said Mr. Raby. "My advice to *you* is to say nothing, or you'll probably make bad worse. But if you choose to say anything, I'm bound to hear it."

"Well, sir," said Cole, in a carneying voice, "what I say is this: what need we go to law over this? If you go against me for hitting him with a stick, after he had hit me with a blacksmith's hammer, I shall have to go against you for shooting me with a gun."

"That is between you and me, sir. You will find a bystander may shoot a malefactor to save the life of a citizen. Confine your defence, at present, to the point at issue. Have you any excuse, as against this young man?" (To Henry.)—"You look pale. You can sit down till your turn comes."

"Not in this house."

"And why not in this house, pray? Is your own house a better?"

No answer from Henry. A look of amazement and



alarm from Grace. But she was afraid to utter a word, after the admonition she had received.

"Well, sir," said Cole, "he was desecrating a church."

"So he was, and I shall talk to him in his turn. But you desecrated it worse. He turned it into a blacksmith's shop; you turned it into a shambles. I shall commit you. You will be taken to Hillsborough to-morrow; to-night you will remain in my strong-room. Fling him down a mattress and some blankets, and give him plenty to eat and drink; I wouldn't starve the devil on old Christmas Eve. There, take him away. Stop; search his pockets before you leave him alone.

Cole was taken away, and Henry's turn came.

Just before this examination commenced, Grace clasped her hands, and cast a deprecating look on Henry, as much as to say, "Be moderate." And then her eyes roved to and fro, and the whole woman was in arms, and on the watch.

Mr. Raby began on him. "As for you, your offence is not so criminal in the eye of the law: but it is bad enough; you have broken into a church by unlawful means; you have turned it into a smithy, defiled the graves of the dead, and turned the tomb of a good knight into an oven, to the scandal of men and the dishonour of God. Have you any excuse to offer?"

"Plenty. I was plying an honest trade, in a country where freedom is the law. The Hillsborough Unions combined against me, and restrained my freedom, and threatened my life, ay, and attempted my life too, before to-day: and so the injustice and cruelty of men drove me to a sanctuary, me and my livelihood. Blame



the Trades, blame the public laws, blame the useless police: but you can't blame me; a man must live."

"Why not set up your shop in the village? Why wantonly desecrate a church?"

"The church was more secret, and more safe: and nobody worships in it. The wind and the weather are allowed to destroy it; you care so little for it you let it moulder; then why howl if a fellow uses it and keeps it warm?"

At this sally there was a broad rustic laugh, which, however, Mr. Raby quelled with one glance of his eye.

"Come, don't be impertinent," said he to Little.

"Then don't you provoke a fellow," cried Henry, raising his voice.

Grace clasped her hands in dismay.

Jael Dence said, in her gravest and most mellow voice, "You do forget the good Squire saved your life this very night."

This was like oil on all the waters.

"Well, certainly I oughtn't to forget that," said Henry, apologetically. Then he appealed piteously to Jael, whose power over him struck everybody directly, including Grace Carden. "Look here, you mustn't think, because I don't keep howling, I'm all right. My arm is disabled: my back is almost broken: my thigh is cut. I'm in sharp pain, all this time: and that makes a fellow impatient of being lectured on the back of it all. Why doesn't he let me go? I don't want to affront him now. All I want is to go and get nursed a bit somewhere."

"Now that is the first word of reason and common sense you have uttered, young man. It decides me not



to detain you. All I shall do, under the circumstances, is to clear your rubbish out of that holy building, and watch it by night as well as day. Your property, however, shall be collected, and delivered to you uninjured: so oblige me with your name and address."

Henry made no reply.

Raby turned his eye full upon him.

"Surely you do not object to tell me your name."

"I do."

"Why?"

"Excuse me."

"What are you afraid of? Do you doubt my word, when I tell you I shall not proceed against you?"

"No: it is not that at all. But this is no place for me to utter my father's name. We all have our secrets, sir. You have got yours. There's a picture, with its face to the wall. Suppose I was to ask you to tell all the world whose face it is you insult and hide from the world?"

Raby turned red with wrath and surprise, at this sudden thrust. "You insolent young scoundrel!" he cried. "What is that to you, and what connection can there be between that portrait and a man in your way of life?"

"There's a close connection," said Henry, trembling with anger, in his turn: "and the proof is that, when that picture is turned to the light, I'll tell you my name: and, till that picture is turned to the light, I'll not tell you my name; and if anybody here knows my name, and tells it you, may that person's tongue be blistered at the root!"

"Oh, how fearful!" cried Grace, turning very pale.



"But I'll put an end to it all. I've got the key, and I've his permission, and I'll—oh, Mr. Raby, there's something more in this than we know." She darted to the picture, and unlocked the padlock, and, with Jael's assistance, began to turn the picture. Then Mr. Raby rose and seemed to bend his mind inwards, but he neither forbade, nor encouraged, this impulsive act of Grace Carden's.

Now there was not a man, nor a woman, in the room, whose curiosity had not been more or less excited about this picture; so there was a general movement towards it, of all but Mr. Raby, who stood quite still, turning his eye inwards, and evidently much moved, though passive.

There happened to be a strong light upon the picture, and as soon as it was turned, the lovely olive face, the vivid features, and glorious black eyes and eyebrows, seemed to flash out of the canvas into life.

Even the living faces, being blondes, paled before it, in the one particular of colour. They seemed fair glittering moons, and this a glowing sun.

Grace's first feelings were those of simple surprise and admiration. But, as she gazed, Henry's words returned to her, and all manner of ideas struck her pell-mell. "Oh, beautiful! beautiful!" she cried. Then, turning to Henry, "You are right; it was not a face to hide from the world—oh! the likeness! just look at *him*, and then at her! can I be mistaken?"

This appeal was made to the company, and roused curiosity to a high pitch; every eye began to compare the dark-skinned beauty on the wall with the swarthy young man who now stood there, and submitted in haughty silence to the comparison.



The words caught Mr. Raby's attention. He made a start, and elbowing them all out of his way, strode up to the picture.

"What do you say, Miss Carden? What likeness can there be between my sister and a smith?" and he turned and frowned haughtily on Henry Little.

Henry returned his look of defiance directly.

But that very exchange of defiance brought out another likeness, which Grace's quick eye seized directly.

"Why, he is still liker you," she cried. "Look, good people! Look at all three. Look at their great black eyes, and their brown hair. Look at their dark skins, and their haughty noses. Oh, you needn't open your nostrils at me, gentlemen; I am not a bit afraid of either of you.—And then look at this lovely creature. She is a Raby too, only softened down by her sweet womanliness. Look at them all three. If they are not one flesh and blood, I have no eyes."

"Oh yes, Miss; and this lady is his mother. For I have *seen* her; and she is a sweet lady; and she told me I had a Cairnhope face, and kissed me for it."

Upon this from Jael, the general conviction rose into a hum that buzzed round the room.

Mr. Raby was struck with amazement. At last he turned slowly upon Henry, and said, with stiff politeness, "Is your name Little, sir?"

"Little is my name, and I'm proud of it."

"Your name may be Little, but your face is Raby. All the better for you, sir."

He then turned his back to the young man, and walked right in front of the picture, and looked at it steadily and sadly.



It was a simple and natural action, yet somehow done in so imposing a way, that the bystanders held their breath, to see what would follow.

He gazed long and steadily on the picture, and his features worked visibly.

"Ay!" he said. "Nature makes no such faces now-a-days. Poor unfortunate girl!" And his voice faltered a moment.

He then began to utter, in a low grave voice, some things that took everybody by surprise, by the manner as well as the matter; for, with his never once taking his eyes off the picture, and speaking in a voice softened by the sudden presence of that womanly beauty, the companion of his youth, it was just like a man speaking softly in a dream.

"Thomas, this picture will remain as it is while I live."

"Yes, sir."

"I find I can bear the sight of you. As we get older we get tougher. You look as if you didn't want me to quarrel with your son? Well, I will not: there has been quarrelling enough. Any of the loyal Dences here?" But he never even turned his head from the picture to look for them.

"Only me, sir; Jael Dence, at your service. Father's not very well."

"Nathan, or Jael, it is all one, so that it is Dence. You'll take that young gentleman home with you, and send him to bed. He'll want nursing: for he got some ugly blows, and took them like a gentleman. The young gentleman has a fancy for forging things—the Lord knows what. He shall not forge things in a church, and defile the tombs of his own forefathers;



but" (with a groan) "he can forge in your yard. All the snobs in Hillsborough shan't hinder him, if that is his cursed hobby. Gentlemen are not to be dictated to by snobs. Arm three men every night with guns; load the guns with ball, not small shot, as I did; and, if those ruffians molest him again, kill them, and then come to me and complain of them. But, mind you, kill them first—complain afterwards. And now take half-a-dozen of these men with you, to carry him to the farm, if he needs it. THERE, EDITH!"

And still he never moved his eyes from the picture, and the words seemed to drop out of him.

Henry stood bewildered, and, ere he could say anything that might revive the dormant irritation of Mr. Raby against him, female tact interposed. Grace clasped her hands to him, with tears in her eyes; and as for Jael Dence, she assumed the authority with which she had been invested, and hurried him bodily away; and the sword-dancers all gathered round him, and they carried him in triumphant procession, with the fiddler playing, and George whistling the favourite tune of "Raby come home again," while every sturdy foot beat the hard and ringing road in admirable keeping with that spirit-stirring march.

When he was gone, Grace crept up to Mr. Raby, who still stood before the picture, and eyed it, and thought of his youth. She took his arm wondrous softly with her two hands, rested her sweet head against his shoulder, and gazed at it along with him.

When she had nestled to him some time in this delicate attitude, she turned her eyes up to him, and murmured, "How good, how noble you are: and how I love you." Then, all in a moment, she curled round



his neck, and kissed him with a tender violence, that took him quite by surprise.

As for Mr. Coventry, he had been reduced to a nullity, and escaped attention all this time: he sat in gloomy silence, and watched with chilled and foreboding heart the strange turn events had taken, and were taking; events which he, and no other man, had set rolling.

## CHAPTER XVII.

FREDERICK COVENTRY, being still unacquainted with the contents of Grace's letter, was now almost desperate. Grace Carden, inaccessible to an unknown workman, would she be inaccessible to a workman, whom Mr. Raby, proud as he was, had publicly recognized as his nephew? This was not to be expected. But something was to be expected, viz., that in a few days the door would be closed with scorn in the face of Frederick Coventry, the miserable traitor, who had broken his solemn pledge, and betrayed his benefactor to those who had all but assassinated him. Little would be sure to suspect him, and the prisoner, when he came to be examined, would furnish some clue.

A cold perspiration bedewed his very back, when he recollected that the chief constable would be present at Cole's examination, and supply the link, even if there should be one missing. He had serious thoughts of leaving the country at once.

Finding himself unobserved, he walked out of the room, and paced up and down the hall.



His thoughts now took a practical form. He must bribe the prisoner to hold his tongue.

But how? and when? and where?

After to-night there might be no opportunity of saying a word to him.

While he was debating this in his mind, Knight the butler crossed the hall.

Coventry stopped him, and asked where the prisoner was.

"Where Squire told us to put him, sir."

"No chance of his escaping—I hope?"

"Not he, sir."

"I should like to take a look at him."

Knight demurred. "Well, sir, you see the orders are—but of course Master won't mind you. I'll speak to him."

"No, it is not worth while. I am only anxious the villain should be secure." This of course was a feeler.

"Oh, there's no fear of that. Why, he is in the strong-room. It's right above yours. If you'll come with me, sir, I'll show you the door."

Coventry accompanied him, and Thomas Knight showed him a strong door, with two enormous bolts outside, both shot.

Coventry felt despair, and affected satisfaction.

Then, after a pause, he said, "But is the window equally secure?"

"Two iron bars, almost as thick as these bolts: and, if it stood open, what could he do but break his neck, and cheat the gallows? He is all right, sir; never you fear. We sarched him, from head to foot, and found no eend o' tools in his pockets. He is a



deep 'un. But we are Yorkshire too, as the saying is. He goes to Hillsbro' town-hall to-morrow; and glad to be shut on him."

Coventry complimented him, and agreed with him that escape was impossible.

He then got a light, and went to his own bedroom, and sat down, cold at heart, before the fire.

He sat in that state, till two o'clock in the morning, distracting his brain with schemes, that were invented only to be dismissed as idle.

At last an idea came to him. He took his fishing-rod, and put the thinner joints together, and laid them on the bed. He then opened his window very cautiously. But, as that made some noise, he remained quite quiet for full ten minutes. Then he got upon the window-seat, and passed the fishing-rod out. After one or two attempts, he struck the window above with the fine end.

Instantly he heard a movement above, and a window cautiously opened.

He gave a low "Hem!"

"Who's that?" whispered the prisoner, from above.

"A man who wants you to escape."

"Nay; but I have no tools."

"What do you require?"

"I think I could do summut with a screw-driver."

"I'll send you one up."

The next minute a couple of small screw-drivers were passed up—part of the furniture of his gun.

Cole worked hard, but silently, for about an hour, and then he whispered down that he should be able to get a bar out. But how high was it from the ground?"



"About forty feet."

Coventry heard the man actually groan at the intelligence.

"Let yourself down on my window-sill. I can find you rope enough for that."

"What, d'ye take me for a bird, that can light of a gate?"

"But the sill is solid stone, and full a foot wide."

"Say ye so, lad? Then luck is o' my side. Send up rope."

The rope was sent up, and presently was fast to something above, and dangled down a little past the window-sill.

"Put out a light on sill," whispered the voice above.

"I will."

Then there was a long silence, during which Coventry's blood ran cold.

As nothing further occurred, he whispered, "What is the matter?"

"My stomach fails me. Send me up a drop brandy, will ye? Eh, man, but this is queer work."

"I can't get it up to you; you must drink it here. Come,—think! It will be five years' penal servitude if you don't."

"Is the rope long enough?"

"Plenty for that."

Then there was another awful silence.

By-and-by a man's legs came dangling down, and Cole landed on the sill, still holding tight by the rope. He swung down on the sill, and slid into the room, perspiring and white with fear.



Coventry gave him some brandy directly,—Cole's trembling hand sent it flying down his throat, and the two men stared at each other.

"Why, it is a gentleman!"

"Yes."

"And do you really mean to see me clear?"

"Drink a little more brandy, and recover yourself, and then I'll tell you."

When the man was fortified and ready for fresh exertions, Coventry told him he must try and slip out of the house at the front door: he would lend him a feather and some oil to apply to the bolts if necessary.

When the plan of operation was settled, Coventry asked him how long it would take him to get to Hillsborough.

"I can run it in two hours."

"Then if I give the alarm in an hour and a half, it won't hurt."

"Give me that start and you may send bloodhounds on my heels; they'll never catch me."

"Now take off your shoes."

While he was taking them off, Cole eyed his unexpected friend very keenly, and took stock of all his features.

When he was ready, Coventry opened his door very carefully, and placed a light so as to be of some use to the fugitive. Cole descended the stairs like a cat, and soon found the heavy bolts and drew them; then slipped out into the night, and away, with fleet foot and wondering heart, to Hillsborough.

Coventry put out his light and slipped into bed.

About four o'clock in the morning the whole house



was alarmed with loud cries, followed by two pistol-shots: and all those who ran out of their bed-rooms at all promptly, found Coventry in his nightgown and trousers, with a smoking pistol in his hand, which he said he had discharged at a robber. The account he gave was, that he had been suddenly awakened by hearing his door shut, and had found his window open; had slipped on his trousers, got to his pistols, and run out just in time to see a man opening the great front door: had fired twice at him, and thought he must have hit him the second time.

On examining the window the rope was found dangling.

Instantly there was a rush to the strong-room.

The bird was flown.

"Ah!" said Coventry. "I felt there ought to be some one with him, but I didn't like to interfere."

George the groom and another were mounted on swift horses, and took the road to Hillsborough.

But Cole, with his start of a hundred minutes, was safe in a back slum before they got half way.

What puzzled the servants most was how Cole could have unscrewed the bar, and where he could have obtained the cord. And while they were twisting this matter every way, in hot discussion, Coventry quaked, for he feared his little gunscrews would be discovered. But no, they were not in the room.

It was a great mystery; but Raby said they ought to have searched the man's body as well as his pockets.

He locked the cord up, however, and remarked it was a new one, and had probably been bought in Hillsborough. He would try and learn where.



At breakfast-time a bullet was found in the door. Coventry apologized.

"Your mistake was missing the man, not hitting the door," said Raby. "One comfort, I tickled the fellow with small shot. It shall be slugs next time. All we can do now is to lay the matter before the police. I must go into Hillsborough, I suppose."

He went into Hillsborough accordingly, and told the chief constable the whole story, and deposited the piece of cord with him. He found that zealous officer already acquainted with the outline of the business, and on his mettle to discover the authors and agents of the outrage, if possible. And it occurred to his sagacity that there was at this moment a workman in Hillsborough, who must know many secrets of the Trades, and had now nothing to gain by concealing them.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THUS the attempt to do Little was more successful than it looks. Its object was to keep Little and Simmons apart, and sure enough those two men never met again in life.

But, on the other hand, this new crime embittered two able men against the Union, and put Grotait in immediate peril. Mr. Ransome conferred with Mr. Holdfast, and they both visited Simmons, and urged him to make a clean breast before he left the world.

Simmons hesitated. He said repeatedly, "Gi' me time! gi' me time!"

Grotait heard of these visits, and was greatly



alarmed. He set Dan Tucker and another to watch by turns and report.

Messrs. Holdfast and Ransome had an ally inside the house. Eliza Watney had come in from another town, and had no Hillsborough prejudices. She was furious at this new outrage on Little, who had won her regard, and she hoped her brother-in-law would reveal all he knew. Such a confession, she thought, might remove the stigma from himself to those better-educated persons, who had made a tool of her poor ignorant relative.

Accordingly, no sooner did the nurse Little had provided inform her, in a low voice, that there was *a change*, than she put on her bonnet, and went in all haste to Mr. Holdfast, and also to the chief constable, as she had promised them to do.

But of course she could not go without talking. She met an acquaintance not far from the door, and told her Ned was near his end, and she was going to tell the gentlemen.

Dan Tucker stepped up to this woman, and she was as open-mouthed to him as Eliza had been to her. Dan went directly with the news to Grotait.

Grotait came all in a hurry, but Holdfast was there before him, and was actually exhorting Simmons to do a good action in his last moments, and reveal those greater culprits who had employed him, when Grotait, ill at ease, walked in, sat down at the foot of the bed, and fixed his eye on Simmons.

Simmons caught sight of him and stared, but said nothing to him. Yet, when Holdfast had done, Simmons was observed to look at Grotait, though he replied to the other. "If you was a Hillsbro' man,



you'd know we tell on dead folk, but not on quick. I told on Ned Simmons, because he was as good as dead: but to tell on Trade, that's different."

"And I think, my poor fellow," suggested Grotait, smoothly, "you might spend your last moments better in telling *us* what you would wish the Trade to do for your wife, and the child, if it lives."

"Well, I think ye might make the old gal an allowance till she marries again."

"Oh, Ned, Ned!" cried the poor woman. "I'll have no man after thee." And a violent burst of grief followed.

"Thou'll do like the rest," said the dying man. "Hold thy bellering, and let me speak, that's got no time to lose. How much will yer allow her, old lad?"

"Six shillings a week, Ned."

"And what is to come of young 'un?"

"We'll apprentice him."

"To my trade?"

"You know better than that, Ned. You are a freeman; but he won't be a freeman's son by our law, thou know'st. But there's plenty of outside trades in Hillsbro'. We'll bind him to one of those, and keep an eye on him for thy sake."

"Well, I must take what I can get."

"And little enough too," said Eliza Watney. "Now do you know that they have set upon Mr. Little, and beaten him within an inch of his life? Oh, Ned, you can't approve that, and him our best friend."

"Who says I approve it, thou fool?"

"Then tell the gentleman who the villain was; for I believe you know."

"I'll tell 'em summut about it."



Grotait turned pale; but still kept his glittering eye fixed on the sick man.

"The job was offered to me; but I wouldn't be in it. I know that much. Says I, 'He has had his squeak.'"

"Who offered you the job?" asked Mr. Holdfast. And at this moment Ransome came in.

"What, another black coat!" said Simmons. "——, if you are not like so many crows over a dead horse." He then began to wander, and Holdfast's question remained unanswered.

This aberration continued so long, and accompanied with such interruptions of the breathing, that both Holdfast and Ransome despaired of ever hearing another rational word from the man's lips.

They lingered on however, and still Grotait sat at the foot of the bed, with his glittering eye fixed on the dying man.

Presently Simmons became silent, and reflected.

"Who offered me the job to do Little?" said he, in a clear rational voice.

"Yes," said Mr. Holdfast. "And who paid you to blow up the forge?"

Simmons made no reply. His fast fleeting powers appeared unable now to hold an idea for above a second or two.

Yet, after another short interval, he seemed to go back a second time to the subject as intelligibly as ever.

"Master Editor!" said he, with a sort of start.

"Yes." And Holdfast stepped close to his bedside.

"Can you keep a secret?"



Grotait started up.

"Yes!" said Holdfast, eagerly.

"THEN SO CAN I."

These were the last words of Ned Simmons. He died, false to himself, but true to his fellows, and faithful to a terrible confederacy, which, in England and the nineteenth century, was Venice and the middle ages over again.

## CHAPTER XIX.

MR. COVENTRY, relieved of a great and immediate anxiety, could now turn his whole attention to Grace Carden; and she puzzled him. He expected to see her come down beaming with satisfaction at the great event of last night. Instead of that she appeared late, with cheeks rather pale, and signs of trouble under her fair eyes.

As the day wore on, she showed positive distress of mind; irritable and dejected by turns, and quite unable to settle to anything.

Mr. Coventry, with all his skill, was quite at fault. He could understand her being in anxiety for news about Little; but why not relieve her anxiety by sending a servant to inquire? Above all, why this irritation? this positive suffering?

A mystery to him, there is no reason why it should be one to my readers. Grace Carden, for the first time in her life, was in the clutches of a fiend, a torturing fiend, called jealousy.

The thought that another woman was nursing Henry Little all this time distracted her. It would



have been such heaven to her to tend him, after those cruel men had hurt him so; but that pure joy was given to another, and that other loved him, and could now indulge and show her love. Show it? Why, she had herself opened his eyes to Jael's love, and advised him to reward it.

And now she could do nothing to defend herself. The very improvement in Henry's circumstances held her back. She could not write to him and say, "Now I know you are Mr. Raby's nephew, that makes all the difference." That would only give him fresh offence, and misrepresent herself; for in truth she had repented her letter long before the relationship was discovered.

No; all she could do was to wait till Jael Dence came up, and then charge her with some subtle message, that might make Henry Little pause if he still loved her.

She detected Coventry watching her. She fled directly to her own room, and there sat on thorns, waiting for her rival to come and give her an opportunity.

But afternoon came, and no Jael; evening came, and no Jael.

"Ah!" thought Grace, bitterly, "she is better employed than to come near me. She is not a self-sacrificing fool like me. When I had the advantage, I gave it up; now she has got it, she uses it without mercy, decency, or gratitude. And that is the way to love. Oh! if my turn could but come again! But it never will."

Having arrived at this conclusion, she lay on the



couch in her own room, and was thoroughly miserable.

She came down to dinner, and managed to take a share in the conversation, but was very languid; and Coventry detected that she had been crying.

After dinner, Knight brought in a verbal message from Jael to Mr. Raby, to the effect that the young gentleman was stiff and sore, and she had sent into Hillsborough for Doctor Amboyne.

"Quite right of her," said the Squire. "You needn't look so alarmed, Grace; there are no bones broken: and he is in capital hands; he couldn't have a tenderer nurse than that great strapping lass, nor a better doctor than my friend and maniac Amboyne."

Next morning, soon after breakfast, Raby addressed his guests as follows:—"I was obliged to go into Hillsborough yesterday, and postpone the purification of that sacred building. But I set a watch on it; and this day I devote to a pious purpose; I'm going to un-Little the church of my forefathers; and you can come with me, if you choose." This invitation, however, was given in a tone so gloomy, and so little cordial, that Coventry, courtier-like, said in reply, he felt it would be a painful sight to his host, and the fewer witnesses the better. Raby nodded assent, and seemed pleased. Not so Miss Carden. She said: "If that is your feeling, you had better stay at home. *I* shall go. I have something to tell Mr. Raby when we get there; and I'm vain enough to think it will make him not quite so angry about the poor dear old church."

"Then come, by all means," said Raby; "for I'm angry enough at present."



Before they got half way to the church, they were hailed from behind; and, turning round, saw the burly figure of Dr. Amboyne coming after them.

They waited for him, and he came up with them. He had heard the whole business from Little, and was warm in the praises of his patient.

To a dry inquiry from Raby, whether he approved of his patient desecrating a church, he said, with delicious coolness, he thought there was not much harm in that, the church not being used for divine service.

At this, Raby uttered an inarticulate but savage growl; and Grace, to avert a hot discussion, begged the Doctor not to go into that question, but to tell her how Mr. Little was.

"Oh, he has received some severe contusions, but there is nothing serious. He is in good hands, I assure you. I met him out walking with his nurse; and I must say I never saw a handsomer couple. He is dark; she is fair. She is like the ancient statues of Venus, massive and grand, but not clumsy; he is lean and sinewy, as a man ought to be."

"Oh, Doctor, this from you?" said Grace, with undisguised spite.

"Well, it *was* a concession. He was leaning on her shoulder, and her face and downcast eyes were turned towards him so sweetly—said I to myself—Hum!"

"What!" said Raby. "Would you marry him to a farmer's daughter?"

"No; I'd let him marry who he likes: only, having seen him and his nurse together, it struck me that, between two such fine creatures of the same age, the



tender relation of patient and nurse, sanctioned, as I hear it is, by a benevolent uncle——”

“Confound your impudence!”

“——Would hardly stop there. What do you think, Miss Carden?”

“I’ll tell you, if you will promise, on your honour, never to repeat what I say.” And she slackened her pace, and lingered behind Mr. Raby.

He promised her.

“Then,” she whispered in his ear, “I HATE YOU!”

And her eyes flashed blue fire at him, and startled him.

Then she darted forward, and took Mr. Raby’s arm, with a scarlet face, and a piteous deprecating glance shot back at the sagacious personage she had defied.

Dr. Amboyne proceeded instantly to put himself in this young lady’s place, and so divine what was the matter. The familiar process soon brought a knowing smile to his sly lip.

They entered the church, and went straight to the forge.

Raby stood with folded arms, and contemplated the various acts of sacrilege with a silent distress that was really touching.

Amboyne took more interest in the traces of the combat. “Ah!” said he, this is where he threw the hot coals in their faces—he has told me all about it. And look at this pool of blood on the floor! Here he felled one of them with his shovel. What is this?—traces of blood leading up to this chest!”

He opened the chest, and found plain proofs inside that the wounded man had hid himself in it for some time. He pointed this out to Raby; and gave it as his



opinion that the man's confederates had come back for him, and carried him away. "These fellows are very true to one another. I have often admired them for that."

Raby examined the blood-stained interior of the chest, and could not help agreeing with the sagacious doctor.

"Yes," said he, sadly; "if we had been sharp, we might have caught the blackguard. But I was in a hurry to leave the scene of sacrilege. Look here; the tomb of a good knight defiled into an oven, and the pews mutilated—and all for the base uses of trade." And in this strain he continued for a long time so eloquently that, at last, he roused Grace Carden's ire.

"Mr. Raby," said she, firmly, "please to add to those base uses one more. One dismal night two poor creatures, a man and a woman, lost their way in the snow; and, after many a hard struggle, the cold and the snow overpowered them, and death was upon them. But, just at her last gasp, the girl saw a light, and heard the tinkling of a hammer. She tottered towards it; and it was a church. She just managed to strike the door with her benumbed hands, and then fell insensible. When she came to herself, gentle hands had laid her before two glorious fires in that cold tomb there. Then the same gentle hands gave her food and wine, and words of comfort, and did everything for her that brave men do for poor weak suffering women. Yes, sir, it was my life he saved, and Mr. Coventry's too; and I can't bear to hear a word against him, especially while I stand looking at his poor forge, and his grates, that you abuse; but I adore them, and bless them; and so would you, if they had saved your life,



as they did mine. You don't love me one bit: and it is very cruel."

Raby stood astonished and silent. At last he said, in a very altered tone, quite mild and deprecating, "Why did you not tell me this before?"

"Because he made us promise not. Would you have had me betray my benefactor?"

"No. You are a brave girl, an honest girl. I love you more than a bit, and, for your sake, I forgive him the whole thing. I will never call it sacrilege again, since its effect was to save an angel's life. Come, now, you have shown a proper spirit, and stood up for the absent, and brought me to submission by your impetuosity, so don't spoil it all by crying."

"No, I won't," said Grace, with a gulp. But her tears would not cease all in a moment. She had evoked that tender scene, in which words and tears of true and passionate love had rained upon her. They were an era in her life; had swept for ever out of her heart all the puny voices that had prattled what they called love to her; and that divine music, should she ever hear it again? She had resigned it, had bade it shine upon another. For this, in reality, her tears were trickling.

Mr. Raby took a much lighter view of it, and, to divert attention from her, he said, "Hallo! why this inscription has become legible. It used to be only legible in parts. Is that his doing?"

"Not a doubt of it," said Amboyne. "Set that against his sacrilege."

"Miss Carden and I are both agreed it was not sacrilege. What is here in this pew? A brass! Why,



this is the brass we could none of us decipher. Hang me, if he has not read it, and restored it!"

"So he has. And where's the wonder? We live in a glorious age" (Raby smiled) "that has read the written mountains of the East, and the Abyssinian monuments: and he is a man of the age, and your mediæval brasses are no more to him than cuneiform letters to Rawlinson. Let me read this resuscitated record. 'Edith Little, daughter of Robert Raby, by Leah Dence his wife:' why here's a hodge-podge! What! have the noble Rabys intermarried with the humble Dences?"

"So it seems. A younger son."

"And a Raby, daughter of Dence, married a Little three hundred years ago?"

"So it seems."

"Then what a pity this brass was not deciphered thirty years ago. But never mind that. All I demand is tardy justice to my protégé. Is not this a remarkable man? By day he carves wood, and carries out a philanthropic scheme (which I mean to communicate to you this very day, together with this young man's report); at night he forges tools that all Hillsborough can't rival; in an interval of his work he saves a valuable life or two; in another odd moment he fights like a lion, one to four; even in his moments of downright leisure, when he is neither saving life nor taking it, he practises honourable arts, restores the fading letters of a charitable bequest, and deciphers brasses, and vastly improves his uncle's genealogical knowledge, who, nevertheless, passed for an authority, till my Crichton stepped upon the scene."

Raby bore all this admirably. "You may add,"



said he, "that he nevertheless finds time to correspond with his friends. Here is a letter, addressed to Miss Carden, I declare!"

"A letter to me!" said Grace, faintly.

Raby handed it over the pew to her, and turned the address, so that she could judge for herself.

She took it very slowly and feebly, and her colour came and went.

"You seem surprised; and so am I. It must have been written two days ago."

"Yes."

"Why, what on earth could he have to say to you?"

"I suppose it is the reply to mine," stammered Grace.

Mr. Raby looked amazement, and something more.

Grace faltered out an explanation. "When he had saved my life, I was so grateful I wanted to make him a return. I believed Jael Dence and he—I have so high an opinion of her—I ventured to give him a hint that he might find happiness there."

Raby bit his lip. "A most singular interference on the part of a young lady," said he stiffly. "You are right, Doctor; this age resembles no other. I suppose you meant it kindly; but I am very sorry you felt called upon, at your age, to put any such idea into the young man's head."

"So am I," said poor Grace. "Oh, pray forgive me. I am so unhappy." And she hid her face in her hands.

"Of course I forgive you," said Raby. "But, unfortunately, I knew nothing of all this, and went and put him under her charge; and here he has found a precedent for marrying a Dence—found it on this con-



founded brass! Well, no matter. Life is one long disappointment. What does he say? Where is the letter gone to? It has vanished."

"I have got it safe," said Grace, deprecatingly.

"Then please let me know what he says."

"What, read his letter to you?"

"Why not, pray? I'm his uncle. He is my heir-at-law. I agree with Amboyne, he has some fine qualities. It is foolish of me, no doubt, but I am very anxious to know what he says about marrying my tenant's daughter." Then, with amazing dignity, "Can I be mistaken in thinking I have a right to know who my nephew intends to marry?" And he began to get very red.

Grace hung her head, and, trembling a little, drew the letter very slowly out of her bosom.

It just flashed through her mind how cruel it was to make her read out the death-warrant of her heart before two men; but she summoned all a woman's fortitude and self-defence, prepared to hide her anguish under a marble demeanour, and quietly opened the letter.

## CHAPTER XX.

"You advise me to marry one, when I love another: and this, you think, is the way to be happy. It has seldom proved so, and I should despise happiness, if I could only get it in that way.

"Yours, sadly but devotedly,

"H. LITTLE.

"Will you wait two years?"



Grace, being on her defence, read this letter very slowly, and, as if she had to decipher it. That gave her time to say, "Yours, etcetera," instead of "sadly and devotedly." (Why be needlessly precise?) As for the postscript, she didn't trouble them with that at all.

She then hurried the letter into her pocket, that it might not be asked for, and said, with all the nonchalance she could manage to assume, "Oh, if he loves somebody else!"

"No; that is worse still," said Mr. Raby. "In his own rank of life, it is ten to one if he finds anything as modest, as good, and as loyal as Dence's daughter. It's some factory-girl, I suppose."

"Let us hope not," said Grace, demurely; but Amboyne noticed that her cheek was now flushed, and her eyes sparkling like diamonds.

Soon afterwards she strolled apart, and took a wonderful interest in the monuments and things, until she found an opportunity to slip out into the churchyard. There she took the letter out, and kissed it again and again, as if she would devour it; and all the way home she was as gay as a lark. Amboyne put himself in her place.

When they got home, he said to her, "My dear Miss Carden, I have a favour to ask you. I want an hour's conversation with Mr. Raby. Will you be so very kind as to see that I am not interrupted?"

"Oh yes. No; you must tell me first, what you are going to talk about. I can't have gentlemen talking nonsense together, *uninterruptedly*."

"You ladies claim to monopolize nonsense, eh? Well, I am going to talk about my friend, Mr. Little. Is he nonsense?"



"That depends. What are you going to say about him?"

"Going to advance his interests—and my own hobby. Such is man."

"Never mind what is man; what is your hobby?"

"Saving idiotic ruffians' lives."

"Well, that *is* a hobby. But, if Mr. Little is to profit by it, never mind; you shall not be interrupted, if I can keep 'les facheux' away."

Accordingly she got her work, and sat in the hall. Here, as she expected, she was soon joined by Mr. Coventry, and he found her in a gracious mood, and in excellent spirits.

After some very pleasant conversation, she told him she was keeping sentinel over Dr. Amboyne and his hobby.

"What is that?"

"Saving idiotic ruffians' lives. Ha! ha! ha!"

Her merry laugh rang through the hall like a peal of bells.

Coventry stared, and then gave up trying to understand her and her eternal changes. He just set himself to please her, and he never found it easier than that afternoon.

Meantime Dr. Amboyne got Raby alone, and begged leave, in the first place, to premise that his (Raby's) nephew was a remarkable man. To prove it, he related Little's whole battle with the Hillsborough trades; and then produced a Report the young man had handed him that very day. It was actually in his pocket during the fight, mute protest against that barbarous act.

The Report was entitled—

"LIFE, LABOUR, AND CAPITAL IN HILLSBOROUGH,"



And was divided into two parts.

Part 1 was entitled—

“PECULIARITIES OF CUTLERY HURTFUL TO LIFE AND  
HEALTH.”

And Part 2 was entitled—

“THE REMEDIES TO THE ABOVE.”

Part 2 was divided thus:—

A. What the masters could do.

B. What the workmen could do.

C. What the Legislature could do.

Part 1 dealt first with the diseases of the grinders; but, instead of quoting it, I ask leave to refer to vol. i. chapter 9, where the main facts lie recorded.

Having thus curtailed the Report, I print the remainder in an Appendix (vol. ii. p. 363) for the use of those few readers who can endure useful knowledge in works of this class.

Raby read the Report without moving a muscle.

“Well, what do you think of him?” asked Amboyne.

“I think he is a fool to trouble his head whether these animals live or die.”

“Oh, that is my folly; not his. At bottom, he cares no more than you do.”

“Then I retract my observation.”

“As to its being folly, or as to Little being the fool?”



"Whichever you like best."

"Thank you. Well, but to be serious, this young man is very anxious to be a master, instead of a man. What do you say? Will you help his ambition, and my sacred hobby?"

"What, plunge you deeper in folly, and him in trade? Not I. I don't approve folly; I hate trade. But I tell you what I'll do. If he and his mother can see my conduct in its proper light, and say so, they can come to Raby, and he can turn gentleman, take the name of Raby, as he has got the face, and be my heir."

"Are you serious, Raby?"

"Perfectly."

"Then you had better write it, and I'll take it to him."

"Certainly." He sat down and wrote as follows:--

"SIR,—What has recently occurred appears calculated to soften one of those animosities which, between persons allied in blood, are always to be regretted. I take the opportunity to say, that if your mother, under your advice, will now reconsider the duties of a trustee, and my conduct in that character, and her remarks on that conduct, I think she will do me justice, and honour me once more with her esteem. Should this be the result, I further hope that she and yourself will come to Raby, and that you will change that way of life, which you have found so full of thorns, and prepare yourself to succeed to my name and place.

"I am, your obedient servant,

"GUY RABY."



"There, read that."

Amboyne read it, and approved it. Then he gave a sigh, and said, "And so down goes my poor hobby."

"Oh, never mind," said Raby; "you've got one or two left in your stable."

Doctor Amboyne went out, and passed through the hall. There he found Mr. Coventry and Miss Carden: the latter asked him, rather keenly, if the conference was over.

"Yes, and not without a result: I'll read it to you." He did so, and Grace's cheek was dyed with blushes, and her eyes beamed with joy.

"Oh, how noble he is, and how good you are. Run! Fly!"

"Such movements are undignified, and unsuited to my figure. Shall I roll down the hill? That would be my quickest way."

This discussion was cut short by a servant, who came to tell the Doctor that a carriage was ordered for him, and would be round in a minute.

Doctor Amboyne drove off, and Miss Carden now avoided Coventry: she retired to her room. But, it seems, she was on the watch; for, on the Doctor's return, she was the person who met him in the hall.

"Well?" said she, eagerly.

"Well, would you believe it? he declines. He objects to leave his way of life, and to wait for dead men's shoes."

"Oh, Doctor Amboyne! And you were there to advise him!"

"I did not venture to advise him. There was so much to be said on both sides." Then he went off to Raby, with the note; but, as he went, he heard Grace



say, in a low voice, "Ah, you never thought of me."

Little's note ran thus:—

"SIR,—I thank you for your proposal, and, as to the first part of it, I quite agree, and should be glad to see my mother and you friends again. But, as to my way of life, I have chosen my path, and mean to stick to it. I hope soon to be a master, instead of a workman; and I shall try and behave like a gentleman, so that you may not have to blush for me. Should blush for myself if I were to give up industry, and independence, and take to waiting for dead men's shoes; that is a baser occupation than any trade in Hillsborough, I think. This is not as politely written as I could wish; but I am a blunt fellow, and I hope you will excuse it. I am not ungrateful to you for shooting those vermin, nor for your offer, though I cannot accept it.

"Yours respectfully,

"HENRY LITTLE."

Raby read this, and turned white with rage.

He locked the letter up along with poor Mrs. Little's letters, and merely said, "I have only one request to make. Never mention the name of Little to me again."

Doctor Amboyne went home very thoughtful.

That same day Mr. Carden wrote from London to his daughter, informing her that he should be at Hillsborough next day to dinner. She got the letter next morning, and showed it to Mr. Raby. He ordered his carriage after breakfast for Hillsborough.

This was a blow to Grace. She had been hoping



all this time a fair opportunity might occur for saying something to young Little.

She longed to write to him, and set his heart, and her own, at rest. But a great shyness and timidity paralysed her, and she gave up the idea of writing, and had hitherto been hoping they might meet, and she might reinstate herself by some one cunning word. And now the end of it all was, that she was driven away from Raby Hall without doing anything but wish, and sigh, and resolve, and give up her resolutions with a blush.

The carriage passed the farm on its way to Hillsborough. This was Grace's last chance.

Little was standing at the porch.

A thrill of delight traversed Grace's bosom.

It was followed, however, by a keen pang. Jael Dence sat beside him, sewing: and Grace saw, in a moment, she was sewing complacently. It was more than Grace could bear. She pulled the check-string, and the carriage stopped.

## CHAPTER XXI.

HENRY LITTLE, at this moment, was in very low spirits. His forge was in the yard, and a faithful body-guard at his service: but his right arm was in a sling, and so he was brought to a stand-still; and Coventry was with Grace at the house; and he, like her, was tortured with jealousies; and neither knew what the other suffered.

But everything vanished in a flood of joy, when the carriage stopped, and that enchanting face looked



out at him, covered with blushes, that told him he could not be indifferent to her.

"Oh, Mr. Little, are you better?"

"I'm all right. But, you see, I can't work."

"Ah, poor arm! But why should you work? Why not accept Mr. Raby's offer? How proud you are!"

"Should you have thought any better of me, if I had?"

"No. I don't want you altered. It would spoil you. You will come and see us at Woodbine Villa? Only think how many things we have to talk of now."

"May I?"

"Why of course."

"And will you wait two years for me?"

"Two years!" (blushing like a rose.) "Why I hope it will not be two days, before you come and see us."

"Ah, you mock me."

"No; no. But suppose you should take the advice I gave you in my mad letter?"

"There's no fear of that."

"Are you sure?" (with a glance at Jael.)

"Quite sure."

"Then —— Good-by. Please drive on."

She wouldn't answer his question; but her blushes and her radiant satisfaction, and her modest but eloquent looks of love, fully compensated her silence on that head, and the carriage left him standing there, a figure of rapture.

Next day Dr. Amboyne rode up to the farm with a long envelope, and waved it over his head in triumph. It contained a communication from the secretary of



the Philanthropic Society. The committee were much struck with Mr. Little's report, but feared that no manufacturer would act on his suggestions. They were willing to advance 500*l.* towards setting Mr. Little himself up as a manufacturer, if he would bind himself to adopt and carry out the improvements suggested in his report. The loan to bear no interest, and the return of the capital to depend upon the success of the scheme. Dr. Amboyne, for the society, to have the right of inspecting Mr. Little's books, if any doubt should arise on that head. An agreement was enclosed, and this was more full, particular, and stringent in form than the above, but the purport substantially the same.

Little could not believe his good fortune at first. But there was no disbelieving it; the terms were so cold, precise, and business-like.

"Ah, Doctor," said he, "you have made a man of me; for this is your doing, I know."

"Of course I used my influence. I was stimulated by two spurs, friendship and my hobby. Now shake hands over it, and no fine speeches, but tell me when you can begin. 'My soul's in arms, and eager for the fray.'"

"Begin? Why as soon as I get the money."

"That will come down directly, if I telegraph that you accept the terms. Call in a witness, and sign the agreement."

Jael Dence was called in, and the agreement signed and witnessed, and away went the Doctor in high spirits, after making an appointment with Henry in Hillsborough for the next day.

Henry and Jael Dence talked eagerly over his new



prospects. But though they were great friends, there was nothing to excite Grace's jealousy. No sooner was Little proved to be Raby's nephew than Jael Dence, in her humility, shrank back, and was inwardly ashamed of herself. She became respectful as well as kind; called him "the young master" behind his back, and tried to call him "Sir" to his face, only he would not let her.

Next day Little went to his mother and told her all. She was deeply interested, but bitterly disappointed at Henry's refusal of Raby's offer. "He will never forgive us now," she said. "And oh, Henry, if you love Grace Carden, that was the way to marry her." This staggered him; but he said he had every reason to hope she would marry him without his sacrificing his independence, and waiting with his hands in his pockets for dead men's shoes.

Then he went to Dr. Amboyne, and there were the five hundred pounds waiting for him; but, never having possessed such a sum before, he begged the Doctor to give him only 100*l.* at a time. To finish for the present with this branch of the story, he was lucky enough to make an excellent bargain, bought the plant and stock of a small master-grinder recently deceased. He then confined the grinding to saws and razors; and this enabled him to set up his own forge on the premises, and to employ a few file-cutters. It was all he could do at starting. Then came the important question, What would the Trades say? He was not long in suspense; Grotait called on him, expressed his regret at the attack that had been made on him, and his satisfaction that now the matter could be happily arranged. "This," said he, "is the very proposal



I was going to make to you, (but you wouldn't hear me,) to set up as a small master, and sell your carving-tools to London instead of Hillsbro.'"

"What? will that make me right with the Trade?"

"Pretty near. We protect the workmen from unfair competition, not the masters. However, if you wish to cure the sore altogether, let your own hands grind the tools, and send them out to be handled by Parkin: he has got men on the Box; trade is dull."

"Well, I don't object to that."

"Then, I say, let bygones be gone-byes."

They shook hands over this, and in a very few hours it was known that Mr. Little was right with the Trade.

His early experiences as a philanthropic master were rather curious; but I shall ask leave to relate them in a series of their own, and to deal at present with matters of more common interest.

He called twice on Grace Carden; but she was out. The third time he found her at home; but there was a lady with her, talking about the ball Mr. and Miss Carden were about to give. It was a subject calculated to excite volubility, and Henry could not get in a word edgeways. But he received some kind glances that made his heart beat.

The young lady sat there and gabbled; for she felt sure that no topic imported by a male creature could compete in interest with "the ball." So, at last, Henry rose in despair. But Grace, to whom her own ball had been a bore for the last half-hour, went with him to the door; and he seized the opportunity to tell her he was a workman no longer, but a master, having workmen under him.



Grace saw he was jubilant, so she was glad directly, and said so.

But then she shook her pretty head, and hoped he would not have to regret Mr. Raby's offer.

"Never," said he, firmly; "unless I lose you. Now I'm a master, instead of a man, won't you wait two years for me?"

"No," said Grace, archly. Then, with a look that sent him to heaven, "Not two, but *twenty*, sooner than you should be unhappy, after all you and I——"

The sentence was never completed. She clapped one hand swiftly before her scarlet face, and ran away to hide, and think of what she had done. It was full five minutes before she would bring her face under the eye of that young gossip in the drawing-room.

As for Henry, he received the blow full in his heart, and it quite staggered him. He couldn't believe it at first; but when he realized it, waves and waves of joy seemed to rise inside him, and he went off in such a rapture he hardly trod the earth.

He went home, and kissed his mother, and told her, and she sympathized with him perforce, though she was jealous at bottom, poor thing.

The next day Grace received an unexpected visitor—Jael Dence.

Grace stared at sight of her, and received her very coldly.

"Oh, Miss," said Jael, "don't look so at me that love you dearly;" and with this threw her arms round her neck, and kissed her.

Grace was moved by this; but felt uncomfortable,



and even struggled a little, but in vain. Jael was gentle, but mighty. "It's about your letter, Miss."

"Then let me go," cried Grace. "I wish I had never written it."

"Nay; don't say so. I should never have known how good you are."

"What a fool I am, you mean. How dare you read my letter? Oh! did he show it you? That was very cruel, if he did."

"No, Miss, he never showed it me; and I never read it. I call it mean to read another body's letter. But, you know, 'tisn't every woman thinks so; and a poor lass that is very fond of me—and I scolded her bitterly—she took the letter out of his pocket, and told me what was in it."

"Very well then," said Grace, coldly, "it is right you should also read his answer. I'll bring it you."

"Not to-day, Miss, if you please. There is no need. I know him: he is too much of a man to marry one girl when he loves another; and 'tis you he loves, and I hope you will be happy together."

A few quiet tears followed these brave words, and Grace looked at her askant, and began to do her justice.

"Ah!" said she, with a twinge of jealousy, "you know him better than I. You have answered for him, in his very words. Yet you can't love him as I do. I hope you are not come to ask me to give him up again, for I can't." Then she said, with quick defiance, "Take him from me if you can." Then, piteously, "And if you do, you will kill me."

"Dear heart, I came of no such errand. I came to tell you I know how generous you have been to me,



and made me your friend till death; and, when a Dence says that, she means it. I have been a little imprudent: but not so very. First word I said to him, in this very house, was, 'Are you really a workman?' I had the sense to put that question; for, the first moment I clapped eyes on him, I saw my danger like. Well, he might have answered me true: but you see he didn't. I think I am not so much to blame. Well, he is the young Squire now, and no mate for me; and he loves you, that are of his own sort. That is sure to cure me—after a while. Simple folk like me aren't used to get their way, like the gentry. It takes a deal of patience to go through the world. If you think I'll let my heart cling to another woman's sweetheart—nay, but I'd tear it out of my breast first. Yes, I dare say it will be a year or two before I can listen to another man's voice without hating him for wooing of me; but Time cures all that don't fight against the cure. And *you'll* love me a little, Miss, now, won't you? You used to do, before I deserved it half as well as I do to-day."

"Of course I shall love you, my poor Jael. But what is my love, compared with that you are now giving up so nobly?"

"It is not much," said Jael, frankly; "but 'a little breaks a high fall.' And I'm one that can only enjoy my own. Better a penny roll with a clear conscience, than my neighbour's loaf. I'd liever take your love, and deserve it, than try to steal his."

All this time Grace was silently watching her, to see if there was any deceit, or self-deceit, in all this: and, had there been, it could not have escaped so keen and jealous an eye. But no, the limpid eye,



the modest, sober voice, that trembled now and then, but always recovered its resolution, repelled doubt or suspicion.

Grace started to her feet, and said, with great enthusiasm, "I give you the love and respect you deserve so well; and I thank God for creating such a character now and then—to embellish this vile world."

Then she flung herself upon Jael, with wonderful abandon and grace, and kissed her so eagerly that she made poor Jael's tears flow very fast indeed.

She would not let her go back to Cairnhope.

Henry remembered about the ball, and made up his mind to go and stand in the road: he might catch a glimpse of her somehow. He told his mother he should not be home to supper; and, to get rid of the time before the ball, he went to the theatre: thence, at ten o'clock, to "Woodbine Villa," and soon found himself one of a motley group. Men, women, and children were there to see the company arrive: and as, amongst working-people, the idle and the curious are seldom well-to-do, they were rather a scurvy lot, and each satin or muslin belle, brave with flowers, and sparkling with gems, had to pass through a little avenue of human beings in soiled fustian, dislocated bonnets, rags, and unwashed faces.

Henry got away from this class of spectators, and took up his station right across the road. He leaned against the lamp-post, and watched the drawing-room windows for Grace.

The windows were large, and, being French, came down to the balcony. Little saw many a lady's head and white shoulders, but not the one he sought.



Presently a bed-room window was opened, and a fair face looked out into the night for a moment. It was Jael Dence.

She had assisted Miss Carden to dress, and had then, at her request, prepared the room, and decked it with flowers, to receive a few of the young lady's more favoured friends. This done, she opened the window, and Henry Little saw her.

Nor was it long before she saw him; for the light of the lamp was full on him.

But he was now looking intently in at the drawing-room windows, and with a ghastly expression.

The fact is, that in the short interval between his seeing Jael and her seeing him, the quadrilles had been succeeded by a waltz, and Grace Carden's head and shoulders were now flitting, at intervals, past the window in close proximity to the head of her partner. What with her snowy, glossy shoulders, her lovely face, and her exquisite head and brow encircled with a coronet of pearls, her beauty seemed half regal, half angelic; yet that very beauty, after the first thrill of joy which the sudden appearance of a beloved one always causes, was now passing cold iron through her lover's heart. For why? A man's arm was round that supple waist, a man's hand held that delicate palm, a man's head seemed wedded to that lovely head, so close were the two together. And the encircling arm, the pressing hand, the head that came and went, and rose and sank, with hers, like twin cherries on a stalk, were the arm, the hand, and the head, of Mr. Frederick Coventry.

Every time those two heads flitted past the window together, they inflicted a spasm of agony on Henry



Little, and, between the spasms, his thoughts were bitter beyond expression. An icy barrier still between them, and none between his rival and her! Coventry could dance voluptuously with her before all the world; but he could only stand at the door of that Paradise, and groan and sicken with jealous anguish at the sight.

Now and then he looked up, and saw Jael Dence. She was alone. Like him, she was excluded from that brilliant crowd. He and she were born to work; these butterflies on the first floor, to enjoy.

Their eyes met; he saw soft pity in hers. He cast a mute, but touching, appeal. She nodded, and withdrew from the window. Then he knew the faithful girl would try and do something or other for him.

But he never moved from his pillar of torture. Jealous agony is the one torment men cannot fly from; it fascinates, it holds, it maddens.

Jael came to the drawing-room door just as the waltz ended, and tried to get to Miss Carden; but there were too many ladies and gentlemen, especially about the door.

At last she caught Grace's eye, but only for a moment; and the young lady was in the very act of going out on the balcony for air, with her partner.

She did go out, accompanied by Mr. Coventry, and took two or three turns. Her cheek was flushed, her eye kindled, and the poor jealous wretch over the way saw it, and ascribed all that to the company of his rival.

While she walked to and fro with fawn-like grace, conversing with Mr. Coventry, yet secretly wondering what that strange look Jael had given her could mean,



Henry leaned, sick at heart, against the lamp-post over the way; and, at last, a groan forced its way out of him.

Faint as the sound was, Grace's quick ear caught it, and she turned her head. She saw him directly, and blushed high, and turned pale, all in a moment; for, in that single moment, her swift woman's heart told her why he was so ghastly, and why that sigh of distress.

She stopped short in her walk, and began to quiver from head to foot.

But, after a few moments of alarm, distress, and perplexity, love and high spirit supplied the place of tact, and she did the best and most characteristic thing she could. Just as Mr. Coventry, who had observed her shiver, was asking her if she found it too cold, she drew herself up to her full height, and, turning round, kissed her hand over the balcony to Henry Little, with a sort of princely grandeur, and an ardour of recognition and esteem that set his heart leaping, and his pale cheek blushing, and made Coventry jealous in his turn. Yes, one eloquent gesture did that in a moment.

But the brave girl was too sensitive to prolong such a situation: the music recommenced at that moment, and she seized the opportunity, and retired to the room; she curtsied to Little at the window, and this time he had the sense to lift his hat to her.

The moment she entered the room, Grace Carden slipped away from Mr. Coventry, and winded her way like a serpent, through the crowd, and found Jael Dence at the door. She caught her by the arm, and



pinched her. She was all trembling. Jael drew her up the stairs a little way.

"You have seen him out there?"

"Yes: and I——Oh!"

"There! there! Think of the folk. Fight it down."

"I will. Go to him, and say I can't bear it. Him, to stand there—while those I don't care a pin for—— Oh, Jael, for pity's sake, get him home to his mother."

"There, don't you fret. I know what to say."

Jael went down; borrowed the first shawl she could lay her hand on; hooded herself with it, and was across the road in a moment.

"You are to go home directly."

"Who says so?"

"She does."

"What, does she tell me to go away, and leave her to *him*?"

"What does that matter? her heart goes with you."

"No, no."

"Won't you take my word for it? I'm not given to lying."

"I know that. Oh, Jael, sweet, pretty, good-hearted Jael, have pity on me, and tell me the truth: is it me she loves, or that Coventry?"

"It is you."

"Oh, bless you! bless you! Ah, if I could only be sure of that, what wouldn't I do for her? But, if she loves me, why, why send me away? It is very cruel that so many should be in the same room with her, and *he* should dance with her, and I must not even look on, and catch a glimpse of her now and then. I won't go home."



"Ah!" said Jael, "you are like all the young men: you think only of yourself. And you call yourself a scholar of the good Doctor's."

"And so I am."

"Then why don't you go by his rule, and put yourself in a body's place? Suppose you was in her place. master of this house like, and dancing with a pack of girls you didn't care for, and *she* stood out here, pale, and sighing; and suppose things were so, that you couldn't come out to her, nor she come in to you, wouldn't it cut you to the heart to see her stand in the street and look so unhappy—poor lad? Be good, now, and go home to thy mother. Why stand here and poison the poor young lady's pleasure—such as 'tis—and torment thyself." Jael's own eyes filled, and that proof of sympathy inclined Henry all the more to listen to her reason. "You are wise, and good, and kind," he said. "But oh, Jael, I adore her so, I'd rather be in hell with her than in heaven without her. Half a loaf is better than no bread. I can't go home and turn my back on the place where she is. Yes, I'm in torments; but I see her. They can't rob my *eyes* of her."

"To oblige *her*!"

"Yes; I'll do anything to oblige *her*. If I could only believe she loves me."

"Put it to the proof, if you don't believe me."

"I will. Tell her I'd much rather stay all night, and catch a glimpse of her now and then; but yet, tell her I'll go home, if she will promise me not to dance with that Coventry again."

"There is a condition!" said Jael.



"It is a fair one," said Henry, doggedly, "and I won't go from it."

Jael looked at him, and saw it was no use arguing the matter. So she went in to the house with his ultimatum.

She soon returned, and told him that Miss Grace, instead of being angry, as she expected, had smiled and looked pleased, and promised not to dance with Mr. Coventry nor anybody else any more that night, "if he would go straight home and consult his beautiful mother." "Those were her words," said the loyal Dence. "She did say them twice over to make sure."

"God bless her!" cried Henry, warmly; "and bless you, too, my best friend. I'll go this moment."

He cast a long, lingering look at the window, and went slowly down the street.

When he got home, his mother was still up and secretly anxious.

He sat down beside her, and told her where he had been and how it had all ended. "I'm to consult my beautiful mother," said he, kissing her.

"What, does she think I am like my picture now?"

"I suppose so. And you are as beautiful as ever in my eyes, mother. And I do consult you."

Mrs. Little's black eyes flashed; but she said, calmly,—

"What about, dearest?"

"I really don't know. I suppose it was about what happened to-night. Perhaps about it all."

Mrs. Little leaned her head upon her hand and thought.



After a moment's reflection, she said to Henry, rather coldly, "If she is not a very good girl, she must be a very clever one."

"She is both," said Henry, warmly.

"Of that *I* shall be the best judge," said Mrs. Little, very coldly indeed.

Poor Henry felt quite chilled. He said no more; nor did his mother return to the subject till they parted for the night, and then it was only to ask him what church Miss Carden went to—a question that seemed to be rather frivolous, but he said he thought St. Margaret's.

Next Sunday evening, Mrs. Little and he being at tea together, she said to him quietly,—“Well, Harry, I have seen her.”

“Oh, mother! where?”

“At St. Margaret's Church.”

“But how did you know her? By her beauty?”

Mrs. Little smiled, and took a roll of paper out of her muff, that lay on the sofa. She unfolded it, and displayed a drawing. It represented Grace Carden in her bonnet, and was a very good likeness.

The lover pounced on it, and devoured it with astonishment and delight.

“Taken from the bust, and retouched from nature,” said Mrs. Little. “Yes, dear, I went to St. Margaret's, and asked a pew-opener where she sat. I placed myself where I could command her features; and, you may be sure, I read her very closely. Well, dear, she bears examination. It is a bright face, a handsome face, and a good face: and almost as much in love as you are.”



"What makes you fancy that? Oh, you spoke to her?"

"Certainly not. But I observed her. Restless and listless by turns—her body in one place, her mind in another. She was so taken up with her own thoughts she could not follow the service. I saw the poor girl try very hard several times, but at last she gave it up in despair. Sometimes she knitted her brow; and a young girl seldom does that unless she is thwarted in her love. And I'll tell you a surer sign still: sometimes tears came for no visible reason, and stood in her eyes. She *is* in love; and it cannot be with Mr. Coventry of Bollinghope: for, if she loved him, she would have nothing to brood on but her wedding-dress; and they never knit their brows, nor bedew their eyes, thinking of that; that's a smiling subject. No, it is true love on both sides, I do believe; and that makes my woman's heart yearn. Harry, dear, I'll make you a confession. You have heard that a mother's love is purer and more unselfish than any other love: and so it is. But even mothers are not quite angels always. Sometimes they are just a little jealous: not, I think, where they are blessed with many children; but you are my one child, my playmate, my companion, my friend, my only love. That sweet girl has come, and I must be dethroned. I felt this, and —— no, nothing could ever make me downright thwart your happiness; but a mother's jealousy made me passive, where I might have assisted you if I had been all a mother should be."

"No, no, mother; I am the one to blame. You see, it looked so hopeless at first, I used to be ashamed to talk freely to you. It's only of late I have opened my heart to you as I ought."



"Well, dear, I am glad you think the blame is not all with me. But what *I* see is my own fault, and mean to correct it. She gave you good advice, dear—to consult your mother. But you shall have my assistance as well; and I shall begin at once, like a zealous ally. When I say at once—this is Sunday—I shall begin to-morrow, at one o'clock."

Then Henry sat down at her knee, and took her white hand in his brown ones.

"And what shall you do at one o'clock, my beautiful mother?"

"I shall return to society."

## CHAPTER XXII.

NEXT morning Mrs. Little gave her son the benefit of her night's reflections.

"You must let me have some money—all you can spare from your business; and whilst I am doing something with it for you, you must go to London, and do exactly what I tell you to do.

"Exactly? Then please write it down."

"A very good plan. Can you go by the express this morning?"

"Why, yes, I could; only then I must run down to the works this minute, and speak to the foreman."

"Well, dear, when you come back, your instructions shall be written, and your bag packed."

"I say, mother, you are going into it in earnest. All the better for me."

At twelve he started for London, with a beautiful set of carving-tools in his bag, and his mother's in-



structions in his pocket: those instructions sent him to a fashionable tailor that very afternoon. With some difficulty he prevailed on this worthy to make him a dress-suit in twenty-four hours. Next day he introduced himself to the London trade, showed his carving-tools, and, after a hard day's work, succeeded in obtaining several orders.

Then he bought some white ties and gloves and an opera hat, and had his hair cut in Bond Street.

At seven he got his clothes at the tailor's, and at eight he was in the stalls of the opera. His mother had sent him there, to note the dress and public deportment of gentlemen and ladies, and use his own judgment. He found his attention terribly distracted by the music and the raptures it caused him; but still he made some observations; and, consequently, next day he bought some fashionable shirts and sleeve-studs and ribbon ties; ordered a morning suit of the same tailor, to be sent to him at Hillsborough; and after canvassing for customers all day, telegraphed his mother, and reached Hillsborough at eleven P.M.

At first sight of him Mrs. Little exclaimed—

“Oh! what have you done with your beautiful hair?”

He laughed, and said this was the fashion.

“But it is like a private soldier.”

“Exactly. Part of the Volunteer movement, perhaps.”

“Are you sure it is the fashion, dear?”

“Quite sure. All the swells in the opera were bullet-headed just like this.”

“Oh, if it is the fashion!” said Mrs. Little; and her mind succumbed under that potent word.



She asked him about the dresses of the ladies in the opera.

His description was very lame. He said he didn't know he was expected to make notes of them.

"Well, but you might be sure I should like to know. Were there no ladies dressed as you would like to see your mother dressed?"

"Good heavens, no! I couldn't fancy you in a lot of colours; and your beautiful head deformed into the shape of a gourd, with a beast of a chignon stuck out behind, made of dead hair."

"No matter, Mr. Henry; I wish I had been with you at the opera. I should have seen something or other, that would have become me." She gave a little sigh.

He was not to come home to dinner that day, but stay at the works, till she sent for him.

At six o'clock, Jael Dence came for him in a fly, and told him he was to go home with her.

"All right," said he; "but how did you come there?"

"She bade me come and see her again—that day I brought the bust. So I went to see her, and I found her so busy, and doing more than she was fit, poor thing, so I made bold to give her a hand. That was yesterday: and I shall come every day—if 'tis only for an hour—till the curtains are all up."

"The curtains! what curtains?"

"Ask no questions, and you will hear no lies."

Henry remonstrated; Jael recommended patience: and, at last, they reached a little villa, half way up Heath Hill. "You are at home now," said Jael, drily.



The new villa looked very gay that evening, for gas and fires were burning in every room.

The dining-room and drawing-room were both on the ground-floor; had each one enormous window with plate glass, and were rooms of very fair size, divided by large folding-doors. These were now open, and Henry found his mother seated in the dining-room, with two workwomen, making curtains, and in the drawing-room were two more, sewing a carpet.

The carpet was down in the dining-room. The tea-table was set, and gave an air of comfort and housewifely foresight, in the midst of all the surrounding confusion.

Young Little stared. Mrs. Little smiled.

"Sit down, and never mind us: give him his tea, my good Jael."

Henry sat down, and, while Jael was making the tea, ventured on a feeble expostulation. "It's all very fine, mother, but I don't like to see you make a slave of yourself."

"Slaving!" said Jael, with a lofty air of pity. "Why, she is working for her own." Rural logic!

"Oh," said Mrs. Little, to her, "these clever creatures we look up to so are rather stupid in some things. Slave! Why, I am a General leading my Amazons to victory." And she waved her needle gracefully in the air.

"Well, but why not let the shop do them, where you bought the curtains?"

"Because, my dear, the shop would do them very badly, very dearly, and very slowly. Do you remember reading to me about Cæsar, and what he said?—that 'a General should not say to his troops "*go* and attack



the enemy, but *come* and attack the enemy.” Well, that applies to needlework. I say to these ladies ‘*come*, sew these curtains, with me;’ and the consequence is, we have done in three days, what no shop in Hillsborough would have done for us in a fortnight: but, as for slaves, the only one has been my good Jael there. She insisted on moving all the heavy boxes herself. She dismissed the porter; she said he had no pith in his arms—that was your expression, I think?”

“Ay, ma’am; that was my word: and I never spoke a truer; the useless body. Why, ma’am, the girls in Cairnhope are most of them well-grown hussies, and used to work in the fields, and carry full sacks of grain up steps. Many’s the time I have *run* with a sack of barley on my back: so let us hear no more about your bits of boxes. I wish my mind was as strong.”

“Heaven forbid!” said Mrs. Little, with comic fervour. Henry laughed. But Jael only stared, rather stupidly. By-and-by she said she must go now.

“Henry shall take you home, dear.”

“Nay, I can go by myself.”

“It is raining a little. He will take you home in the cab.”

“Nay, I’ve got legs of my own,” said the rustic.

“Henry, dear,” said the lady quietly, “take her home in the cab, and then come back to me.”

At the gate of Woodbine Villa, Jael said, “it was not good-night this time; it was good-by; she was going home for Patty’s marriage.”

“But you will come back again?” said Henry.



"Nay, father would be all alone. You'll not see me here again, unless you are in sorrow or sickness."

"Ah, that's like you, Jael. Good-by, then, and God bless you wherever you go."

Jael summoned all her fortitude, and shook hands with him in silence. They parted, and she fought down her tears, and he went gaily home to his mother. She told him she had made several visits, and been cordially received. "And this is how I paved the way for you. So, mind! I said my brother Raby wished you to take his name, and be his heir; but you had such a love of manufactures and things, you could not be persuaded to sit down as a country gentleman. 'Indeed,' I said, 'his love of the thing is so great that, in order to master it in all its branches, nothing less would serve him than disguising himself, and going as a workman. But now,' I said, 'he has had enough of that, so he has set up a small factory, and will, no doubt, soon achieve a success.' Then I told them about you and Doctor Amboyne. Your philanthropic views did not interest them for a single moment; but I could see the poor dear Doctor's friendship was a letter of introduction. There will be no difficulty, dear. There shall be none. What society Hillsborough boasts, shall open its arms to you."

"But I'm afraid I shall make mistakes."

"Our first little parties shall be given in this house. Your free and easy way will be excused in a host; the master of the house has a latitude; and, besides, you and I will rehearse. By the way, please be more careful about your nails; and you must always wear gloves when you are not working; and every afternoon you will take a lesson in dancing with me."



"I say, mother, do you remember teaching me to dance a minuet, when I was little?"

"Perfectly. We took great pains; and, at last, you danced it like an angel. And, shall I tell you, you carry yourself very gracefully? — well, that is partly owing to the minuet. But a more learned professor will now take you in hand. He will be here to-morrow at five o'clock."

Mrs. Little's rooms being nearly square, she set up a round table, at which eight could dine. But she began with five or six.

Henry used to commit a solecism or two. Mrs. Little always noticed them, and told him. He never wanted telling twice. He was a genial young fellow, well read in the topics of the day, and had a natural wit; Mrs. Little was one of those women who can fascinate when they choose; and she chose now: her little parties rose to eight; and as, at her table, everybody could speak without rudeness to everybody else, this round table soon began to eclipse the long tables of Hillsborough in attraction.

She and Henry went out a good deal; and, at last, that which Mrs. Little's good sense had told her must happen, sooner or later, took place. They met.

He was standing talking with one of the male guests, when the servant announced Miss Carden; and, whilst his heart was beating high, she glided into the room, and was received by the mistress of the house with all that superabundant warmth which ladies put on and men don't: guess why?

When she turned round from this exuberant affection, she encountered Henry's black eye full of love and delight, and his tongue tied, and his swarthy



cheek glowing red. She half started, and blushed in turn; and with one glance drank in every article of dress he had on. Her eyes beamed pleasure and admiration for a moment, then she made a little curtsey, then she took a step towards him, and held out her hand a little coyly.

Their hands and eyes encountered; and, after that delightful collision, they were both as demure as cats approaching cream.

Before they could say a word of any consequence, a cruel servant announced dinner, to the great satisfaction of every other soul in the room.

Of course they were parted at dinner-time; but they sat exactly opposite each other, and Henry gazed at her so, instead of minding his business, that she was troubled a little, and fain to look another way. For all that she found opportunity once or twice to exchange thoughts with him. Indeed, in the course of the two hours, she gave him quite a lesson how to speak with the eye—an art in which he was a mere child compared with her.

She conveyed to him that she saw his mother, and recognized her; and also she hoped to know her.

But some of her telegrams puzzled him.

When the gentlemen came up after dinner, she asked him if he would not present her to his mother.

“Oh, thank you!” said he, naïvely; and introduced them to each other.

The ladies curtsied with grace, but a certain formality, for they both felt the importance of the proceeding, and were a little on their guard.

But they had too many safe, yet interesting topics, to be very long at a loss.



"I should have known you by your picture, Mrs. Little."

"Ah, then I fear it must be faded since I saw it last."

"I think not. But I hope you will soon judge for yourself."

Mrs. Little shook her head. Then she said, graciously, "I hear it is to you I am indebted that people can see I was once—what I am not now."

Grace smiled, well pleased. "Ah," said she, "I wish you could have seen that extraordinary scene, and heard dear Mr. Raby—Oh, madam, let nothing make you believe you have no place in his great heart!"

"Pray, pray do not speak of that. This is no place. How could I bear it?" and Mrs. Little began to tremble.

Grace apologized. "How indiscreet I am; I blurt out everything that is in my heart."

"And so do I," said Henry, coming to her aid.

"Ah, *you!*" said Grace, a little saucily.

"We do not accept you for our pattern, you see. Pray excuse our bad taste, Harry."

"Oh, excuse *me*, Mrs. Little. In some things I should indeed be proud if I could imitate him; but in others—of course—you know."

"Yes, I know. My dear, there is your friend Mr. Applethwaite."

"I see him," said Henry, carelessly.

"Yes; but you don't see everything," said Grace, slily.

"Not all at once, like you ladies. Bother my friend



Applethwaite. Well, if I must—I must. Here goes—from Paradise to Applethwaite.”

He went off, and both ladies smiled, and one blushed; and, to cover her blush, said, “It is not every son that has the grace to appreciate his mother so.”

Mrs. Little opened her eyes at first, and then made her nearest approach to a laugh, which was a very broad smile, displaying all her white teeth. “That is a turn I was very far from expecting,” said she.

The ice was now broken, and, when Henry returned, he found them conversing so rapidly, and so charmingly, that he could do little more than listen.

At last Mr. Carden came in from some other party, and carried his daughter off, and the bright evening came too soon to a close; but a great point had been gained; Mrs. Little and Grace Carden were acquaintances now, and cordially disposed to be friends.

The next time these lovers met, matters did not go quite so smoothly. It was a large party, and Mr. Coventry was there. The lady of the house was a friend of his, and assigned Miss Carden to him. He took her down to dinner, and Henry sat a long way off, but on the opposite side of the table.

He was once more doomed to look on at the assiduities of his rival, and it spoilt his dinner for him.

But he was beginning to learn that these things must be in society; and his mother, on the other side of the table, shrugged her shoulders to him, and conveyed by that and a look that it was a thing to make light of.

In the evening the rivals came into contact.

Little, being now near her he loved, was in high spirits, and talked freely and agreeably. He made



quite a little circle round him; and as Grace was one of the party, and cast bright and approving eyes on him, it stimulated him still more, and he became quite brilliant.

Then Coventry, who was smarting with jealousy, set himself to cool all this down by a subtle cold sort of jocoseness, which, without being downright rude, operates on conversation of the higher kind like frost on expanding buds. It had its effect, and Grace chafed secretly, but could not interfere. It was done very cleverly. Henry was bitterly annoyed; but his mother, who saw his rising ire in his eye, carried him off to see a flowering cactus in a hot-house that was accessible from the drawing-room. When she had got him there, she soothed him and lectured him. "You are not a match for that man in these petty acts of annoyance, to which a true gentleman and a noble rival would hardly descend, I think; at all events, a wise one would not; for, believe me, Mr. Coventry will gain nothing by this."

"Isn't driving us off the field something? Oh, for the good old days when men settled these things in five minutes, like men; the girl to one, and the grave to t'other."

"Heaven forbid those savage days should ever return. We will defeat this gentlemen quietly, if you please."

"How?"

"Well, whenever he does this sort of thing, hide your anger; be polite and dignified; but gradually drop the conversation, and manage to convey to the rest that it is useless contending against a wet blanket. Why, you foolish boy, do you think Grace Carden likes him any the better? Whilst you and I talk, she is



snubbing him finely. So you must stay here with me, and give them time to quarrel. There, to lessen the penance, we will talk about her. Last time we met her, she told me you were the best-dressed gentleman in the room."

"And did she like me any better for that?"

"Don't you be ungracious, dear. She was proud of you. It gratified her that you should look well in every way. Oh, if you think that we are going to change our very natures for you, and make light of dress——why did I send you to a London tailor? and why am I always at you about your gloves?"

"Mother, I am on thorns."

"Well, we will go back. Stop; let me take a peep first."

She took a peep, and reported,

"The little circle is broken up. Mr. Coventry could not amuse them as you did. Ah! she is in the sulks, and he is mortified. I know there's a French proverb 'Les absents ont toujours tort.' But it is quite untrue; judicious absence is a weapon, and I must show you how and when to use it."

"Mother, you are my best friend. What shall we do next?"

"Why, go back to the room with me, and put on imperturbable good-humour, and ignore him; only mind you do that politely, or you will give him an advantage he is too wise to give you."

Henry was about to obey these orders, but Miss Carden took the word out of his mouth.

"Well! the cactus!"

Then, as it is not easy to reply to a question so vague, Henry hesitated.



"There, I thought so," said Grace.

"What did you think?" inquired Mrs. Little.

"Oh, people don't go into hot-houses to see cactus; they go to flirt, or else gossip. I'll tell Mrs. White to set a shorthand writer in the great aloe, next party she gives. Confess, Mrs. Little, you went to criticize poor us, and there is no cactus at all."

"Miss Carden, I'm affronted. You shall smart for this. Henry take her directly, and show her the cactus, and clear your mother's character."

Henry offered his arm directly, and they went gaily off.

"Is she gone to flirt, or to gossip?" asked a young lady.

"Our watches must tell us that," said Mrs. Little. "If they stay five minutes—gossip."

"And how many—flirtation?"

"Ah, my dear, *you* know better than I do. What do you say? Five-and-twenty?"

The young ladies giggled.

Then Mr. Coventry came out strong. He was mortified, he was jealous; he saw a formidable enemy had entered the field, and had just outwitted and outmanœuvred him. So what does he do but step up to her, and say to her, with the most respectful grace, "May I be permitted to welcome you back to this part of the world? I am afraid I cannot exactly claim your acquaintance; but I have often heard my father speak of you with the highest admiration. My name is Coventry."

"Mr. Coventry, of Bollinghope?" (He bowed.) "Yes; I had the pleasure of knowing your mother in former days."



"You have deserted us too long."

"I do not flatter myself I have been missed."

"Is anybody ever missed, Mrs. Little? Believe me, few persons are welcomed back so cordially as you are."

"That is very flattering, Mr. Coventry. It is for my son's sake I have returned to society."

"No doubt; but you will remain there for your own. Society is your place. You are at home in it, and were born to shine in it."

"What makes you think that, pray?" and the widow's cheek flushed a little.

"Oh, Mrs. Little, I have seen something of the world. Count me amongst your most respectful admirers. It is a sentiment I have a right to, since I inherit it."

"Well, Mr. Coventry, then I give you leave to admire me—if you can. Ah, here they come. Two minutes! I am afraid it was neither gossip nor flirtation, but only botany."

Grace and Henry came back, looking very radiant.

"What do you think?" said Grace, "I never was more surprised in my life; there really is a cactus, and a night ceres into the bargain. Mrs. Little, behold a penitent. I bring you my apology, and a jardinea."

"Oh, how sweet! Never mind the apology. Quarrel with me often, and bring me a jardinea. I'll always make it up on those terms."

"Miss White," said Grace, pompously, "I shall require a few dozen cuttings from your tree, please tell the gardener. Arrangements are such, I shall have to grow jardenias on a scale hitherto unprecedented."



There was a laugh, and in the middle of it a servant announced Miss Carden's carriage.

"What attentive servants you have, Miss White. I requested that man to be on the watch, and, if I said a good thing, to announce my carriage directly; and he did it pat. Now see what an effective exit that gives me. Good-by, Miss White, good-by, Mrs. Little; may you all disappear as neatly."

Mr. Coventry stepped smartly forward, and offered her his arm with courteous deference; she took it, and went down with him, but shot over his shoulder a side-glance of reproach at Little, for not being so prompt as his rival.

"What spirits!" said a young lady.

"Yes," said another; "but she was as dull as the grave last time I met her."

So ended that evening, with its little ups and downs.

Soon after this, Henry called on Miss Carden, and spent a heavenly hour with her. He told her his plans for getting on in the world, and she listened with a demure complacency, that seemed to imply she acknowledged a personal interest in his success. She told him she had always *admired* his independence in declining his uncle's offer, and now she was beginning to *approve* it: "It becomes a man," said she.

From the future they went to the past, and she reminded him of the snow-storm and the scene in the church; and, in speaking of it, her eye deepened in colour, her voice was low and soft, and she was all tenderness.

If love was not directly spoken, it was constantly



implied, and, in fact, that is how true love generally speaks. The eternal "*Je vous aime*" of the French novelist is false to nature, let me tell you.

"And, when I come back from London, I hope your dear mother will give me opportunities of knowing her better."

"She will be delighted: but going to London!"

"Oh, we spend six weeks in London every year; and this is our time. I was always glad to go, before—London is very gay now, you know—but I am not glad now."

"No more am I, I can assure you. I am very sorry."

"Six weeks will soon pass."

"Six weeks of pain is a good long time. You are the sunshine of my life. And you are going to shine on others, and leave me dark and solitary."

"But how do you know I shall shine on others? Perhaps I shall be duller than you will, and think all the more of Hillsborough, for being in London."

The melting tone in which this was said, and the coy and tender side-glance that accompanied it, were balm of Gilead to the lover.

He took comfort, and asked her, cheerfully, if he might write to her.

She hesitated a single moment, and then said "Yes."

She added, however, after a pause, "But you can't; for you don't know my address."

"But you will tell me."

"Never! never! Fifty-eight Clarges Street."

"When do you go?"

"The day after to-morrow: at twelve o'clock."



"May I see you off at the train?"

She hesitated. "If—you—like," said she, slowly: "but I think you had better not."

"Oh, let me see the last of you."

"Use your own judgment, dear."

The monosyllable slipped out, unintentionally: she was thinking of something else. Yet, as soon as she had uttered it, she said "Oh!" and blushed all over. "I forgot I was not speaking to a lady," said she, innocently; then, right archly, "please forgive me."

He caught her hand, and kissed it devotedly.

Then she quivered all over. "You mustn't," said she, with the gentlest possible tone of reproach. "Oh dear, I am so sorry I am going." And she turned her sweet eyes on him, with tears in them.

Then a visitor was announced, and they parted.

He was deep in love. He was also, by nature, rather obstinate. Although she had said she thought it would be better for him not to see her off, yet he would go to the station, and see the last of her.

He came straight from the station, to his mother. She was upstairs. He threw himself into a chair, and there she found him, looking ghastly.

"Oh, mother! what shall I do?"

"What is the matter, love?"

"She is false; she is false. She has gone up to London, with that Coventry."



## CHAPTER XXIII.

"WHAT! eloped?"

"Heaven forbid. Why, mother, I didn't say she was alone with him; her father was of the party."

"Then surely you are distressing yourself more than you need. She goes to London with her papa, and Mr. Coventry happens to go up the same day; that is really all."

"Oh, but, mother, it was no accident. I watched his face, and there was no surprise when he came up with his luggage and saw her."

Mrs. Little pondered for a minute, and then said, "I daresay all her friends knew she was going up to London to-day; and Mr. Coventry determined to go up the same day. Why, he is courting her: my dear Henry, you knew before to-day that you had a rival, and a determined one. If you go and blame her for his acts, it will be apt to end in his defeating you."

"Will it? Then I won't blame her at all."

"You had better not till you are quite sure: it is one way of losing a high-spirited girl."

"I tell you I won't. Mother!"

"Well, dear?"

"When I asked leave to come to the station, and see her off, she seemed put out."

"Did she forbid you?"

"No; but she did not like it, somehow. Ah, she knew beforehand that Coventry would be there."

"Gently, gently! She might think it possible, and



yet not know it. More likely it was on account of her father. You have never told him that you love his daughter?"

"No."

"And he is rather mercenary: perhaps that is too strong a word; but, in short, a mere man of the world. Might it not be that Grace Carden would wish him to learn your attachment either from your lips, or from her own, and not detect it in an impetuous young man's conduct on the platform of a railway, at the tender hour of parting?"

"Oh, how wise you are, and what an insight you have got! Your words are balm. But, there——he is with her for ever so long, and I am here all alone."

"Not quite alone, love: your counsellor is by your side, and may, perhaps, show you how to turn this to your advantage. You write to her every day, and then the postman will be a powerful rival to Mr. Coventry, perhaps a more powerful one than Mr. Coventry to you."

Acting on this advice, Henry wrote every day to Grace Carden. She was not so constant in her replies; but she did write to him now and then, and her letters breathed a gentle affection that allayed his jealousy, and made this period of separation the happiest six weeks he had ever known. As for Grace, about three o'clock she used to look out for the postman, and be uneasy and restless if he was late, and, when his knock came, her heart would bound, and she generally flew upstairs with the prize, to devour it in secret. She fed her heart full with these letters, and loved the writer better and better. For once the



present suitor lost ground, and the absent suitor gained it. Mrs. Little divined as much from Grace's letters and messages to herself; and she said with a smile, "You see 'Les absents n'ont pas toujours tort.'"

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